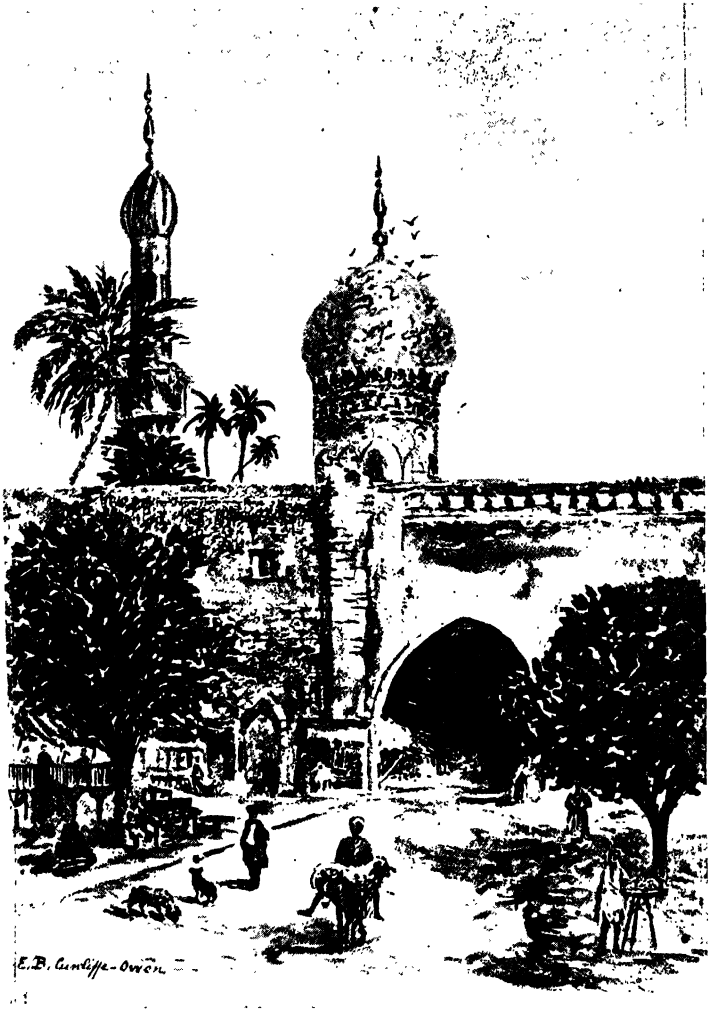
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"Thro' the Gates of Memory"



THE BLUE MOSQUE, BAGHDAD.

[*Frontispiece.*

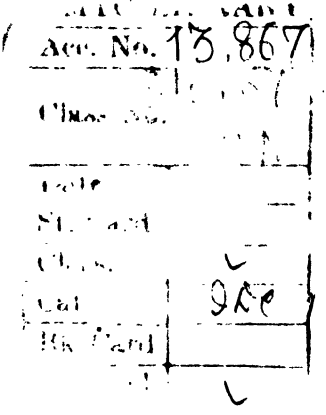
"Thro' the Gates of Memory"

(From the Bosphorus to Baghdad)

:: :: By Betty Cunliffe-Owen :: ::

With Two Colour and Sixteen Black and White Illustrations from Photographs and Original Paintings by the Author

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"MY GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP."

Oh! Life is a garden, wherein, to and fro,
Down pathways of Friendship, men come and men go.
Some linger, — some pass, — yet I know there are some
Make my Garden the fairer, because they have come.

In Life's Garden of Friendship for them I will grow
"Rosemary" ("that's for Remembrance") you know,
And "Pansies" (for Thoughts) round each name I will trace
As a garland of Love, in the sunniest place.

"Old Time" is the Gardener, and always for you
He will water the seeds of "Remembrance" true,
And my pansies of gold he will tenderly train,
Till you pass through my Garden, dear Friends, once again.

FOREWORD

MRS. GUNLIFFE-OWEN has asked me to write an introduction to her account of her experiences in the Near East during the period immediately succeeding the Armistice. Her husband, Lieut.-Colonel Cunliffe-Owen, was appointed by me when I was G.O.C. in Chief in Mesopotamia to take over the control of the large refugee canvas city at Baqubah, some twenty odd miles east of Baghdad. His experience of the Near East specially qualified him to administer this canvas city and generally control the care and eventual repatriation of its inhabitants. Joined by Mrs. Cunliffe-Owen, they both, aided by their experience of Constantinople and the Near East, devoted themselves to the care and the welfare of the unfortunate people placed in their charge.

An account of the refugee camp at Baqubah has been written by Brigadier-General Austin*, who was the first Commandant, but, for the information of those who may not have read it, I would here state that the war on the Russo-Turkish frontier of Anatolia involved in its scope the numerous Christian races occupying the highlands between Kurdistan and Persia. These people consisted partly of Armenians and partly of the many mountain clans, who for some years have been referred to as Assyrians and who claim to be the descendants of the people of ancient Assyria. With the collapse of Russia and the development of the Turkish plans for a pan-Turk union throughout Asia, these tribes were sorely pressed, and in 1917 were driven with their families and their flocks, fighting desperately, on to the British road between Baghdad and the Caspian. Covered from continued attack by the militia they had raised among themselves, but more and more destitute, and more and more

* "The Baqubah Refugee Camp," The Tract Press, 22 Buckingham Gate.

swept by disease, these sturdy remnants, under their Patriarch, or Bishop palatine, came into the kindly hands of British soldiers. Before hospitals could be established, the British rank and file found themselves actively engaged in nursing a large community suffering from dysentery, enteric and typhus. These broken peoples, numbering 50,000 souls, were accommodated, as soon as could be, under a large canvas city at Baqubah and endeavours were made to help them in restoring some social order and industries until such time as they could be repatriated.

The Assyrian portion of these expatriated peoples belonged to one of those ancient churches of Asia which, originally outside the Roman Empire, had never attended the Councils at Nicea, and had never come within the control or agreements of Rome. To this day they constitute a primitive church whose doctrines are practically identical with those of the reformed Church of England, and among whom, as a means of a friendly liaison, has resided for many years a special mission from the Archbishop of Canterbury under the guidance of Dr. Wigram. These facts made them of special interest to the British and Americans, and with the conclusion of the Armistice it was hoped that they could have been restored promptly to their own country, where they might have continued their own independent and simple life. The general unsettled condition, however, of the post-war period in Asia Minor, and the failure of the civilized world to take up their responsibility for the Christian population in Moslemdom, prevented any prompt action on their behalf, and they were compelled to continue their enforced inhabitation in our Camps. Such Camps, however well conducted, could not but produce some demoralization of independence and character. Added to this, the strain of the summers in Camp on the plains of Mesopotamia was peculiarly trying to people used to living at high altitudes. To alleviate the troubles of these people, to maintain some semblance of social organization and assist their own Patriarch, Bishop and leaders to cater for their temporal and spiritual needs, was the devoted duty of those charged with the care of their Camps.

To their post-Armistice disappointment of a speedy return, Colonel and Mrs. Cunliffe-Owen were able to bring all the alleviation that organization and kindly thought could contribute, while as circumstances improved, Colonel Cunliffe-Owen was

charged with the eventual repatriation of the hill portion of the Assyrians there to the uplands beyond Mosul.

Mrs. Cunliffe-Owen will tell the story herself far better than I can, but she will probably not do full tribute to her own and her husband's exertions, nor to the memory of British kindness engendered in Assyrian hearts by them and their predecessors, which we hope will dwell for many years in the memory of an interesting and unfortunate people.

G. F. MACMUNN,
Lt.-Genl.
(Formerly G.O.C. in C. Mesopotamia,
1919-20).

Army Headquarters, India,
13th January, 1923.

PREFACE

THE word "Mesopotamia" brings to memory the days of my childhood, when conjuring tricks were the rage in the schoolroom. It was a magical word, fraught with mystery, and used only on those rare occasions when some extra special feat was to be accomplished. Indeed, so blood-curdling and wonderful did it sound to our ears, that when uttered in a deep, sepulchral tone, it invariably gave us a creepy sensation down the spine and froze the very marrow in our bones. I can see again the eager faces, the eyes round with wonder, as the first syllable "Mes" fell from my brother's lips with a long-drawn, hissing sound, after which there was generally a pause while he counted three. Then followed "O" as he slowly drew in his breath and rolled his eyes from side to side—the audience, meanwhile, remaining spell-bound, and the atmosphere becoming electric, until the final syllable "*Potamia!*" was shouted in a loud, commanding voice. A sharp tap of the conjuror's wand on my father's old top hat—and hey, presto!—a struggling guinea-pig or a messy plum pudding was triumphantly produced, to be greeted with shrieks of applause.

Two words and two only ever approached Mesopotamia in power and potency, and they were "Mulligatawny" and "Constantinople." The former sounded distinctly devilish, not to say hot, and never failed to arrest attention. While around the latter name a sinister glamour hung, filling us with delicious thrills. There floated before our eyes visions of fat Pashas, in whose mysterious harems the bow-string and sack, or a hurried plunge into the Bosphorus, were things of daily occurrence.

Looking back through the Gates of Memory, when young hearts thrilled to the magic of a word, how little did I dream

that in years to come, for me again Life's Great Conjuror should utter those magical names and—hey, presto !—like the struggling guinea-pig, I should find myself transplanted from a land of safety to strange scenes and wild regions, where, if the honest truth be told, I found life more devilishly hot and sinister than ever our childish dreams had contemplated.

But I must not digress from my narrative.

The wanderings of a pilgrim in the East must perforce be monotonously personal, and alas ! I can claim no literary merit to gloss with golden words the dullest parts ; nor can I aspire to write of these wonderful lands from either their historical or scientific point of view. That I leave to more able pens than mine.

I will simply crave kindness in advance for pages that may sometimes bore the reader, and endeavour to state as truthfully as possible, first, my life in Constantinople before the war as the wife of a military attaché, and later as a modern Eve in the land of the Garden of Eden.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In view of the interest centred upon Mosul at the present moment, and in view of the differing opinions held concerning this disputed area, perhaps I may be allowed to express a side of the question which up till now has been but lightly touched upon. I spent a considerable time in Mosul, where my husband had much to do with the settlement of the Assyrian Christians in that neighbourhood. Apart from anything else, these people should not be cast aside in favour of our former and present potential enemies, the Turks. If the Turks return and once more occupy Mosul, these Christians who have furnished the backbone of our Levies are utterly doomed. The Assyrian question, therefore, seems a potent factor against handing back Mosul to the Turks. The country north of Mosul has nothing to do with the Arab administration of Mesopotamia, but is dealt with by the British authorities.

As for the Arab administration, there is no substantial ground for divorcing Mosul and the Vilayet generally from the remainder of Iraq. There are no Turkish inhabitants to speak of in or around Mosul, and personally I have never heard the Turkish language in those parts, except from the mouths of Armenian and Assyrian inhabitants, who have fled from Turkish rule.

Further East, towards Erbil and Kirkuk, there are Turks, and the language is heard, but they are of the ancient Seljuk settlement, dating long before the coming of the Ottoman Turk. There are far more people of Turkish race in North-west Persia than in any part of Mosul, as there are, of course, in Russian Central Asia.

Mosul itself, before the war, was merely a military centre for the Turks, where they maintained the head-quarters of the Army Corps to reinforce their hold over Arab countries. Through their

action in the war the Turks lost their Arab subjects and countries, so that their claim for the restitution of all they lost would be just as valid as their claim to Mosul.

Having wisely or unwisely (I am not competent to say which) embarked, for reasons that seemed adequate at the time, on our Arab policy, we are compelled to go on with it and support the Arab rule in Iraq. But Iraq as an Arab state cannot continue without that Northern Province, which looks to Baghdad for trade and without which Baghdad cannot survive. Our administration North of Mosul by the customary British methods has enabled Khurds and Christians to live in peace together, and it is merely Turkish propaganda that raises unrest in Southern Khurdistan.

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PART I
TURKEY

"THRO' THE GATES OF MEMORY"

(FROM THE BOSPHORUS TO BAGHDAD)

CHAPTER I

"THE THRESHOLD OF THE EAST"

AS I think forward, I see the ubiquitous aeroplane drawing the children of the world into closer relationship one with the other. By this advent of Wings one can now fly to Paris for an afternoon's shopping, or perchance invite a friend to a week-end party somewhere in Egypt. At a not far distant date, one may be arranging easy return trips for a summer's holiday to the North Pole. But my brain turns giddy at such aerial flights, and on the more gossamer wings of memory I think *backwards* again to those last peaceful months spent in Turkey before the war.

Alas, since then that misguided country has struggled and bled through years of terror, suffering and turmoil, to gain the aspirations of the catchword of "Liberty." Let us hope that for her, too, may dawn the light of a new day in the great League of Nations. But with the unpractical drastic methods now being diffused into her blood, much of the languorous glamour and mystery of the East must necessarily pass from her.

For myself, I think never again, save in my dreams, shall I behold that land of colour and sunshine, of fertile

valleys and luxuriant soil, as I beheld it those enchanting days of Spring ere yet the clouds had gathered over her.

* * * * * *

The greys and neutral tints of this "Isle of Mists" roll back, and around me floats the subtle, vague, intangible atmosphere of an Eastern land, possessing me once more with all its glow and brilliance.—Constantinople, its mosques and minarets bathed in sunshine, rises again before my vision, beautiful as on the day we landed, while the Bosphorus, blue as a sapphire, lay gently sleeping at the feet of the Golden Horn.

In the autumn of 1913 my husband was ordered to Turkey, there to take up his duties as military attaché.

The position in the Ottoman Empire at that time was distinctly chaotic, since for years the country had been undergoing a process of dissolution.

Mohammed V., the weakest of Sultans, was completely in the hands of the Young Turk party, and the hero of Adrianople, Enver Pasha, had recently assumed office as War Minister. Prince Said Halim (a cousin of the Khedive of Egypt) was the puppet Grand Vizier. He was ably supported, indeed, entirely ruled by Talaat Pasha (Minister of the Interior), and also by Djemal Pasha (Minister of Marine).

Talaat was one of the most striking figures and practically leader of the New party.

His origin, I believe, was partly Bulgar, and this may have accounted for the force and determination which he undoubtedly possessed. Of medium height, with massive shoulders and heavy physical build, he certainly resembled more the Bulgarian than Turkish type.

Djemal Pasha, on the contrary, was a man of slighter build, utterly remorseless, cunning and selfish. It was

he who was responsible in great measure (though he denies it in his book) for the terrible Armenian atrocities in Syria, the scene of his later exploits.

At this time there were gathered in Constantinople countless British financial advisers endeavouring by some means to audit budgeting problems, and last, but by no means least, a new British Ambassador (Sir Louis Mallet), recently arrived, was speedily making himself popular.

In those early days of 1915, when the fatal New Year broke upon a startled world, it did not seem at all clear whether the Turks would throw in their lot with the British or Germans.

Turkey was reorganizing her army, and the sound of marching feet resounded incessantly day and night through the streets of Pera. Men were ruthlessly dragged from their homes to enter the army. All Ottoman subjects, whether Greek, Armenian or Jew, had to serve with the colours. Poor wretches. They did not want to be enrolled: they had no notion *why* they had to fight. But of what use to protest? "Allah alone knew"—it was "Kismet," and so, with dark, troubled eyes, and a dumb pleading in their hearts against their tragic fate, they were driven into the ranks like cattle to the shambles.

In general, the year 1914 in Turkey was a very fitful and disturbing one. Apart from the attempt to settle down after the Balkan War and the vast military reorganization, which had to be put in hand (this time, too, under a German Military Mission of very considerable proportions), there were rumours of war almost from the spring. Differences with the Greeks over the Islands question and the treatment of the Greek populations left in Thrace, and also in Asia Minor, caused considerable friction. The Turks, for purposes of security,

as they maintained, removed Greeks wholesale from Thrace and bundled them down to the coast to get away as best they could, while in the Smyrna vilayet, the same thing was happening just as it is at the present time.

The Turks, too, were making frantic efforts to augment their fleet so as to be able to encounter the Greeks on equal terms should war arise, remembering, to their cost, that in the last war the Greeks, by virtue of one ship alone of their fleet, namely, the *Avêroff*, could do what they liked on the water. But although the Turks had an appreciable fleet numerically, all the efforts of our Naval Mission in Turkey had been only able to produce a spasmodic raid by the *Hamidieh*, which got out of the Straits and caused some consternation on the Greek sea-board.

Turkish women were also not idle, and were showing their patriotism by collecting in the streets of Pera, some, indeed, going so far as to cut off their beautiful hair, which they sold, together with their jewels, in order to obtain money for building two Dreadnoughts. These latter were being constructed in England.

The British Naval Mission, under our most capable Admiral Limpus, was still functioning in Turkey, and somehow I think there was a feeling of disappointment among them, owing to the fact that in the Balkan War of 1913-14 the Mission in Athens had more reason for self-congratulation than had the Turkish Mission.

The chief topic of conversation naturally was the political situation; still, in spite of our anxieties as to what the Turks had in view, we were gay—gay with a reckless uncertainty of the future. I do not know if the indifference of the East had got into our blood, but it was an attitude of mind which now fills me with wonder.

Strictly speaking, there were no Court functions in



Map showing places visited by the Author.

Constantinople, for the ladies of the harem at the Sultan's palace could not entertain; consequently the various Embassies and Legations had perforce to depend largely upon themselves for amusement.

Nevertheless, in many ways, social life was particularly pleasant.

Dances, dinners, polo, picnics were the order of the day. One of the most terrifying amusements was, I remember, the Drag Hunt. Not only was the pace fast and furious, but it was generally over two lines of country each about nine kilometres in length. Most of the horses were young and raw, eager to sow their wild oats, and with never, I think, "a reformed rake" among them to steady the pace.

Those best mounted for this fearsome entertainment were the German Embassy staff, headed by the Ambassador himself—the famous Baron von Wagenheim. It was, strangely enough, about this time that his hunting spirit became almost an obsession. It increased in volume after a memorable and rather sudden visit to the Kaiser at Corfu, the result being a hasty trip over to Ireland, where, among other "business" transactions, the Baron bought a stud of Irish hunters for the drag.

During the winter I made many friends amongst the Turkish women, and occasionally invited the wives of officials to my house. Indeed, one never-to-be-forgotten function remains burnt into my brain to this day.

It was my first harem luncheon party, and as I think backwards, I can see now what an extremely cosmopolitan little "Hen Convention" gathered round my table on that auspicious occasion. In spite of the assertion that the Moslem creed says women have "no souls," I was agreeably surprised to find many of the wives of the upper classes in Constantinople had never-

theless minds, and moreover were artistic and well-educated.

According to the rules of society in the East, when ladies of the harem are invited to the house of a foreigner all members of the sterner sex must softly and silently vanish away.

This is sometimes a problem, most of the servants being of the male persuasion, as a little Serbian friend was wont to remark; generally, too, they are Greeks, Croats or Montenegrins, only one's coachman or gardener being a Turk; however, such a trivial matter as the removal of a "mere man" does not take long or weigh heavily in the Near East.

Punctually at the appointed hour, the carriages drove up, each with its veiled occupant, the attendant kavass swung down from the box seat and handed in his precious charge to my tender keeping.

The first to arrive was a rather exalted personage, namely, Madame Djemal Pasha, and, to my dismay, the only lady invited who could speak neither French nor English.

It was an epoch-making moment, as my Turkish vocabulary consisted of three pithy words, namely, *Sagh* (right), *Son* (left) and *Dur* (stop), especially conned for the use of my coachman.

Madame Djemal Pasha arrived full of chat, and throwing back her *charchaf* (veil), greeted me with a volley of words.

Then the pantomime began. I bowed—Madame bowed. Endeavouring to look intelligent, I smiled brightly. Madame, not to be outdone, did the same. We shook hands, somewhat lengthily and impressively—a pause—another bow from Madame followed by a similarly encouraging one from myself, until I began to feel we were developing into nodding mandarins.

So, armed with the courage of despair, and nerve worthy of a better cause, I launched into Turkish. Waving gracefully to the seat of honour, namely, the sofa on my right, I murmured in gently modulated tones the one pregnant word "*Sagh*" (right). It acted like magic; instantly, Madame Djemal moved to the place indicated and sank on the sofa; there was a moment's awful silence. Had I offended my august guest? Was my career in Turkey ended? My only two remaining words, namely, *Son* (left) and *Dur* (stop), seemed hopelessly inadequate to express contrition. I glanced tentatively towards the sofa, Madame's veil was again discreetly lowered and seemed strangely agitated, no doubt with indignation, not to say resentment at the curt manner I dismissed her to a seat—alas!—what an impression to give of English hospitality.

I confess I felt helpless. Suddenly a peal of most unaffected laughter fell on my ears, and throwing all etiquette to the winds, the little lady came to my rescue. Removing her *charchaf*, she proceeded to powder her nose, patted and arranged her glossy hair, the beauty of which could be displayed to my admiring eyes alone, it being a humiliation in those days for a woman in Turkey to expose her hair to the public gaze.

Finally, with truly oriental abandonment, she settled herself comfortably among the sofa cushions and began sprinkling herself and me with a distinctly pungent perfume. There we remained drenched but smiling until the next visitor was announced, who happily supplied the missing link in conversation, which soon flowed freely.

Madame Jemil Bey was a charming Circassian, blonde and with bewitching blue eyes, who spoke French, English and German perfectly. Her husband was one of the Young Turk party and a personal friend of Enver Pasha. Consequently Madame Jemil Bey was more or

less emancipated and allowed to mix freely in foreign society, only official and state functions being prohibited by order of the Grand Vizier.

Many other guests then began to arrive, and among these the French wife of the Persian Ambassador, whom, if I remember rightly, was Prince Mirza Khan. Madame M., though leading the veiled and secluded life of a high-born Moslem lady, was strangely content with her lot, and devoted to her husband, a delightfully well-read and interesting man.

More rigid in her observances than even the Turkish ladies themselves, Madame M. did not even walk in the sheltered gardens of her house in Stambul, the surrounding walls not being considered high enough for the privacy of a harem lady of exalted rank.

This, however, I was informed, was only a concession to the Moslem laws in a Mohammedan country; out of Turkey Madame M. went unveiled.

As luncheon progressed coffee and cigarettes unloosed many tongues. Crackers, too, which I had provided, were a source of endless ripples of laughter.

All went merry as marriage-bells save for one *contre-temps* which for a while froze the blood in my veins. My two Greek maids, being unaccustomed to wait at table, brought the "sweet" round before the meat. It was "a trifle"—save the mark—and would, without doubt, have passed as original and the latest mode in England's culinary art, had not a large and heavy screen at the far end of the dining-room suddenly begun to sway and rock in a most indecorous and drunken fashion. I could not believe my *eyes;* my *ears*, however, soon solved the mystery, for from behind its sheltering leaves strange guttural and hoarse whispers were hurled at the frightened maids, and I guessed my Croat major-domo had secreted himself unbidden, and, alas, to me unknown,

behind the screen. An upheaval to his feelings evidently beyond human control was occasioned when the pudding was served before the meat.

However, to his credit be it said, one hoarse wail of anguish alone passed his lips. I glanced anxiously at Madame Djemal Pasha; there was for a moment a startled look in her soft brown eyes and a slight rustle of silken draperies seemed to undulate down the table among my guests, but a second glance showed a perfectly steady, heavily-built screen stolidly glued to the floor, and I breathed freely—all was well again.

Turkish ladies do not hurry over meals; in fact, I think the word hurry is out of repute in Turkish dictionaries. Consequently, it was nearly four o'clock before the last guest departed, and, strangely enough, little Madame Djemal Pasha was the last to leave.

There was a look of mute apology in her face as she moved towards me, endeavouring by gestures to explain the non-arrival of her carriage. Then, desperately, I played my last trump card in Turkish, and murmured soothingly, "*Dur*" (stop).

How long I should have had to remain stroking her hand and uttering *Dur* at intervals I do not know; the clatter of horses' hoofs saved the situation and at the same time the monotony of my conversation. Doors were thrown open and Madame's carriage was announced.

Discreetly veiling her face, she hurried downstairs, and I watched the big negro slave in attendance hand in his precious charge and lock the door.

As the carriage with resplendent kavass and high-stepping horses swung round the street corner, I fancied I caught the flutter of a lace handkerchief, and a moment's glimpse of dainty henna-tipped fingers waving me "Adieu."—Alas! since then the cruel waves of war have broken over Europe.—Where are you now,

my little sheltered harem ladies?—You, who laughed so gaily in the days gone by, nodding and dimpling like happy, irresponsible children over the crackers at my luncheon table.—Have you, too, been forced to face the bigger problems of Life, and, like your less sheltered Western sisters, learned silently to weep, and work, and wait—and yet with all—to smile?

Many moons have waned since then and many changes come to Turkey.

Down by the sweet waters of Asia little harem ladies no longer sit on Fridays, veiled and discreet, to mourn their dead. The presence of a "mere man" would no longer cause a flutter in the dove-cot of a Moslem household. Now, unveiled, emancipated, free, a Turkish lady treads alone the streets of Stamboul. She needs no negro slave to guard her.

And yet, the echo of gay laughter still lingers in my memory. . . . A vision comes again of henna-tipped fingers which wave to me through the intervening years. . . . Dear little friends of long ago, I wonder . . . I often wonder if your hearts are as light, your laughter as infectious as on that memorable day we gathered round my luncheon table. . . .

CHAPTER II

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE DOLMA-BAGCHE (THE SULTAN'S PALACE)

THE crowds waited patiently; they had waited with eager curiosity since early dawn. They had watched the morning break over the Bosphorus, changing the sky from deepest sapphire to glowing gold. And now the sun shone bravely on this, a gala day in the land of Turkey.

To-day the people's hero, Enver Pasha, was about to wed a Moslem lady of rank, in fact no less a personage than a royal princess!

Enver Pasha's ambition knew no bounds. He was a man risen from the humblest stock; but, in spite of his lowly origin, so powerful had he become that the Sultan deemed it expedient to grant his request and bestow upon the young War Minister the hand of his niece in marriage.

There is, perhaps, nothing more characteristic of a man than his smile. It was Enver's smile which always intrigued me. He was a man of small stature, dandified in appearance and always immaculately dressed. He had black hair and restless blue eyes, a somewhat pale face and the delicately tapering hands of an Idealist. Yet Enver was no dreamer. He was a man of action —as a rule silent—preferring to reply to questions with

a bow and just the suggestion of a smile—that slow, enigmatical drawing of the lips apart which might mean anything or nothing, and which one realized was distinctly characteristic of Enver's rather subtle and ruthless mentality.

The Princess, on the contrary, was stolid in appearance, short and plump ; indeed, to be painfully and brutally honest, she was fat. " There would be too much of her in the coming by and by," I mused sadly, as my eyes wandered aimlessly over her generous proportions ; but—as *quantity* in Eastern belles ranks before *quality* —one could not have too much of a good thing, and Enver had a very good thing. He was decidedly a lucky man.

On this great occasion all the diplomatic world was invited. There was just a tang of autumn in the air and the nip in the morning breeze was enough to tingle our cheeks as we alighted at the Palace.

According to oriental custom the bridegroom receives all male representatives at a banquet followed by a reception, and money is not spared but lavishly thrown to the populace. Hence the crowds surrounding the Palace, eager to pick up a few piastres.

The ladies are bidden to another entertainment given by the prospective bride, who stands for hours receiving her guests, adorned in all her jewels.

In one of the great halls of the Palace we assembled, drawn up as if for a procession, each country represented by its Ambassadress, behind whom followed, according to precedence, the wives of the various members of the Embassy staff. The British Ambassador, Sir Louis Mallet, was not married, consequently Mrs. Beaumont (the wife of the Councillor) headed our procession.

With great dignity we filed past in turn, making our curtsy to the Princess, who stood in a room apart

on a raised dais and under a golden canopy, ready to receive us.

There is a very trying Eastern custom which requires that no food must pass the lips of the bride on her wedding-day. This is hardly conducive to good looks. Resplendent, not to say sumptuous, in her wedding garments, the poor girl's deadly pallor almost rivalled the whiteness of her "oyster ornaments" (as a Dutch lady remarked on the Princess's pearls). Certainly they were magnificent, and stood out dazzlingly in all their glory on an ample chest—rows and rows of pearls finally losing themselves somewhere in the hinterland of her person.

Passing from the "Presence," we were conducted through the private apartments, amongst others the boudoir, the bath, and finally the bridal chamber itself! It was unique!—a revelation! Here East met West in the quaintest and most original manner.

I found myself, on entering, beside Mrs. Beaumont —one whose happy nature, I am thankful to say, was blessed with a keen sense of humour. In stifled whispers we exchanged occasional remarks of unadulterated enjoyment as we flitted from one priceless discovery to another.

The room was thickly carpeted with Turkish rugs. Rich embroidered curtains hung over the doorways. Crystal chandeliers swung from the ceiling, and everywhere the air was heavy with the scent of perfume.

Facing us was not the customary divan smothered in cushions such as one usually sees in most Turkish apartments. Oh, dear, no! Nothing of the sort. A gilded four-poster bed reared itself majestically in front of us, draped above and beneath with gaily coloured silks. "Mr. Maple's fancy touch," I whispered, as our eyes glanced from the downy pillows to the eiderdown

quilt, on which was neatly folded the bride's night attire (flowing Eastern garments embroidered in gold and silver), and beside these the very up-to-date striped pyjamas of the bridegroom! Beneath the couch, modestly hiding from the light of day, peeped out four little coloured slippers—two red and two blue!

We were distinctly interested. There was a mixture of Bond Street and Bosphorus, a *je ne sais quoi,* about this chamber which was frankly absorbing, and we awaited further developments.—They came.

Reclining in a somewhat nonchalant, almost reckless fashion, half propped against the Maple bed, we espied a homely Turkish hubble-bubble!* Western pyjamas and Eastern hookah!—it was fairly bewildering.

To the right of the room were heavily-barred windows, disclosing a view simply divine and enough to gladden the heart of any bride. Between the windows stood an old-fashioned cheval glass, evidently, however, not for use. Here another strange form of humour met us. Against the long glass were placed two prayer-desks, cushioned and complete, which, reflecting themselves in the mirror, seemed to fill the room with an odour of sanctity. It needed but a choir and organ to complete the Western touch. I can truthfully say I was curious. No effort of my imagination could envisage Enver and his bride (true followers of the Prophet) repeating their devotions facing *that* mirror, each on a prayer-desk, side by side! It was an arresting note! Thoughts of the little Pasha with his non-committal smile rose up before me.

Etiquette demanded Enver should approach his wife on bended knees—kissing the hem of her garment in token of respect—this, we were told, was a concession to her royal rank and also to his inferior birth.

* Pipe with water-bowl.

Of course Enver was a self-made man, but, as someone wittily remarked, "he worshipped his maker!" Consequently the humiliation must have been doubly great.

CHAPTER III

A VISIT TO NICEA, THE OLD BYZANTINE CAPITAL OF TURKEY IN ASIA

SO winter drifted on, folding down into the usual social life of Pera; and soon spring—enchanting spring—came stealing in upon us.

Down by the sweet waters of Asia the fields already began to be starred with anemones—purple, red and blue, like colours in Earth's paint-box.

Between the ridges of the hills were brilliant patches of vivid green. It was April now in Turkey, ever the most entrancing time to visit her, for then she is a veritable garden of beauty, jewelled all over with flowers. Then the Judas and quince trees are pink with blossom, and everywhere the sun-kissed earth seems singing to the melody of spring.

About this date F. decided to take a trip through Asia Minor and Anatolia, there to examine first-hand the conditions which existed after the reorganization of the Army. The Turks had now reduced it to efficient proportions, having due regard to the loss of territory and elimination of useless elements. Great attention, too, had been paid to the question of mobilization and possibilities of concentration. The War Office, together with other departments, showed a great change from the time-wasting methods of former days.

The German Military Mission, of whom F. saw a great deal, not only filled important posts in the Turkish

War Office, but also on the staffs of divisions and army corps. The head of this Mission was General Liman von Sanders, who later came prominently to the front against us in the Gallipoli Campaign.

As I was most anxious to see Broussa, Nicea and other interesting places through which F. would have to pass, we decided I should take the opportunity at the same time and accompany him.

"It was a glorious spring morning when we started on our trip to Nicea, once an old Byzantine capital of Turkey in Asia. In the crisp clear air the cry of 'Allah-el-Allah' was echoing over the water, calling the Faithful to prayer, when there fell upon our ears a volley of curses hurled indiscriminately at the family-trees of all stray pedestrians, and round the corner dashed Abdullah, my Turkish Jehu, smiling, alert, and ready to take us to the quay.

"Oh! the peril and excitement of a drive through the streets of cosmopolitan Pera, with its motley crowd of humanity. Here Greek, Levantine, Khurd and Jew bargain and jostle over the cobblestones, for even at this early hour the streets are busy. Outside one of the embassies a gold-laced *kavass* haggles with a Khurd for vegetables; heaped-up baskets of green stuff, golden and juicy oranges, purple grapes, bananas, dates, are displayed in temporary booths on the pavement, or lie shaded from the sun under gay-coloured awnings. Slowly a *hamel* (porter) winds his way up from Galata, his load carried on a quaint red leather cushion strapped securely to his shoulders. Next a soldier on his way to the *Taxim* (barracks) swings by, followed by a picturesque Montenegrin servant, or a sturdy Anatolian peasant. It is ever a scene of vivid life, of motion, unfailing in interest; for to live in Constantinople is to live in a wide and varied world.

"To Abdullah, guiding our big Russian horses at a smart trot, the crowds were merely flies, to be swept from his path, and that to the accompaniment of strange, guttural cries and a lavish use of the whip. Finally we reached the bridge spanning the Golden Horn, and driving down to the quay, pulled up alongside the boat, which was ready to convey us to Mudania (our first landing-place). On the deck stood the captain, a big, blue-eyed Turk, who saluted with quiet dignity, while a chattering, gesticulating crew uncoiled the rope binding us to shore. A steady breeze carried us away from the hustle and din of Galata Quay, out on to the shimmering waters of the Bosphorus and across the Sea of Marmora.

"Looking back from the deck, over the dancing waves which divided Europe from Asia, a picture met my gaze, not soon to fade from memory, and I drank it all in like a draught of cooling nectar. Golden in the morning light, and already melting into the blue, stood Galata's guardian Tower, ever sentinel beside her. Dolma-Bagche, the Sultan's beautiful palace, hung like a jewel over the water's edge, glinting in the sunshine, while the domes and minarets of St. Sophia rose majestically out of Stamboul and silhouetted themselves darkly against the azure sky. After the first Balkan War, it was in the Mosque of St. Sophia that King Ferdinand of Bulgaria vowed to place again the Cross over the Crescent, and to be crowned King of Constantinople. Knowing, however, the royal fear of infection, the wily Turk ordered the Mosque to be used as a hospital for the worst cases of enteric, at the same time being careful that this information should be conveyed to the Bulgarian Court, whereupon, I was told, the newspapers ceased to urge King Ferdinand's coronation there.

"As we entered the Gulf of Guemlik, in which Mudania

is situated, boats of quaint build passed up and down, with delicious green and orange sails, or lay at anchor heaped up with fruit ready to unload. From Mudania a train runs to the important little town of Broussa, which lies nestling at the foot of Mount Olympus. It is called Bithynian Olympus to distinguish it from the Olympus of old Greece. Alas! no classic gods people its snow-capped heights, but many a wild tribe and cut-throat brigand finds therein a happy hunting ground and a refuge from the law.

"In Broussa itself there is little to tempt one to remain; formerly, the ancient Kings of Bithynia resided there, and it was, I believe, the first town to capitulate to the Mussulmans in A.D. 924. Now its attractions are confined mostly to silk and carpet industries.* Everywhere are mulberry orchards for the cultivation of silkworms, and gardens of olive and quince trees.

"I purchased silks for my Turkish friends in Constantinople, and while F. occupied himself with official matters I visited the wonderful Green Mosque, for which Broussa is famous. It is built of emerald-coloured tiles, blending from vivid green to gorgeous peacock-blue, in a rich crescendo of colour; the dome is white, but has taken on opalescent tints from exposure to sun and rain. Altogether it is a perfect example of Mussulman art, yet it leaves the impression of a costly jewel set in inferior surroundings.

"We stayed but one night at Broussa. The next morning, before the sun rose too high in the heavens, a couple of ancient vehicles, to which were harnessed little rats of ponies, appeared as if by magic, ready to convey us on our journey. To one our boxes were precariously tied with ropes behind us, while the other

* Broussa has now suffered great devastation since the last Turco-Greek operations.



[*From an original sketch by the Author.*

THE GREEN MOSQUE AT BROUSSA.

[*To face p.* 20.

seemed solely for the use of the horses' dinner, which swung serenely in the breeze in bags of bursting sacking. An escort of mounted gendarmerie was in attendance, presumably to defend our lives from brigands. On strong Turkish horses, with their smart blue uniforms and gay lances, they added distinction, not to say respectability, to our incongruous *cortège*, and thus equipped we started on our journey to Isnik, better known, perhaps, as Nicea. A long track of dusty road stretched white before us as we bumped and jolted over the wheel and hoof ruts. F., who fancied he suffered from a sluggish liver, became distinctly unmanageable, till I gave him food for thought by affirming positively that no 'self-respecting' liver could dream of being anything but brisk and lively under such circumstances. In morose and painful silence we passed an hour of undignified gymnastics! Reaching, at last, the summit of a slight incline, the beautiful valley of Broussa lay smiling at our feet. In the spring it is carpeted all over with buttercups, shimmering like a cloth of gold, and reminding me of the lovely plains of Tuscany.

"Half-way we halted to change the ponies. Wild-looking peasants clustered unpleasantly round in mild, but friendly fashion. Their hospitality, however, was above reproach, for they pressed on us little cups of Turkish coffee, thick and sweet, but, I believe, quite safe to drink anywhere in Turkey. As the shadows lengthened and the rays of the setting sun caught snow-capped Olympus, crowning her with a diadem of opals, we entered Isnik, thankful in heart, though bruised in body.

"Modern Isnik crouches in the corner of ancient Nicea, and was formerly one of the principal cities of Asia Minor. Built on the shores of a lovely lake which communicates with the Sea of Marmora, it is in every

respect an ideal spot for a capital. It is surrounded by wonderful old walls several feet thick, and dating from the fourth century—broken walls indeed, and moss-covered by the march of countless years, yet their beauty has withstood the devastating sword, and to-day they stand faithful guardians of Byzantine art and glory. Those shattered columns and mutilated headless statues, if they could but speak, what could they not disclose ? Under their arches Moslem and Crusader passed, and on those ivy-covered ramparts floated the banners of both Cross and Crescent. Now there is little to mark those days of valour—merely a cluster of wooden Turkish houses by the shores of a silent lake.

" Into the doubtful comfort of the one and only Khan (or inn) we plunged, tired, jaded and very hungry. It is easy to imagine our feelings when told that no room was available, all the sleeping accommodation having been taken the day before by Baroness von Wagenheim, wife of the German Ambassador, and her party. The Baroness, whom I knew well, was young and distinctly charming, but to-night no charms could turn us from our purpose ; sleep at the Khan we would, were the All-Highest himself to bar the way ! Finally, by dint of much *baksheesh* and other persuasive and effectual means, a small partition was found and screened off from the public gaze. Two eider-down quilts were spread Turkish fashion on the floor, inside of these sheets being sewn, clean and fresh for each guest, and thankfully I laid myself down to rest. How long I slept I do not know. My dreams were interrupted by a low, ominous rumble coming from behind the partition next door. It ran through the gamut of the sleeper's emotions in a forceful and dramatic manner, ending in a defiant and distinctly Teuton grunt. Obviously, one of the secretaries was sleeping heavily. To drown the German

band I tried to inspire F. to do something drastic, even to start a rival performance, but he was beyond such ribald remarks—there was nothing but to bear it, or go out into the moonlight, and banish thoughts of further sleep. I chose the latter course. . . .

"Into the magical night I stepped and into an enchanted world. It was the mystical hour before dawn. . . . Above me stretched a curtain of blue, 'the moon touched with quicksilver each languorous leaf and flower,' while the air was heavy with the scent of magnolia and a gentle, caressing breeze stirred the lake at my feet into a thousand scintillating diamonds. It was such a night as lends itself to strange fancies and fleeting visions; fantastic and illusive shadows seemed to whisper and to circle round me, calling up memories of dead, forgotten years. My imagination ran riot and I pictured once more the glories of the old Byzantine Court. . . . Thus spell-bound I remained, deep in reverie, till the shadows seemed to mingle with my dreams, and out of their mysterious depths I fancied the ruins grew and formed themselves again into symmetry and beauty. Broken pillars curved into graceful arches, or fashioned themselves anew into gilded capital and columns of alabaster. Embroideries of rainbow tints covered the shattered walls, while fountains flung their subtle perfumes through cool and spacious corridors. Again I saw the Imperial Palace in all its splendour, and under a canopy of gold crowned with roses reclined the young Lacedæmonian General Pausanias, attended by his Spartan nobles. By his side was beautiful Cleonice, the ill-fated Byzantine maiden whom he so ardently loved and sought to wed, but, alas! whose tragic death at his hands on their bridal day shadowed the rest of his life and haunted him to the hour of his death. . . . (There is a tradition that Pausanias passed through

Nicea to meet the ill-fated Cleonice, but I cannot vouch for its historical accuracy.)

"Then on the wings of imagination, memory carried me onward to a later date. The vast hall was now the scene of that brilliant banquet given to celebrate the great Council of Nicea, and gorgeous in his robes of state I beheld seated the Emperor Constantine, one hand resting lightly on a scroll of parchment containing the sacred articles of the Nicene creed. Flute-players and wine-bearers seemed to mix with the moonlight and shadow as they flitted through the marble colonnades, discoursing sweet music, or bearing costly beverages to prelates of the Early Christian Church.

"Slowly the moon sank behind the high tree-tops, and with her mystic radiance the pageant passed. I waited, expectant . . . a moment's hushed stillness, then a single streak of rosy light shot out from the East, mirroring itself in the transparent lake. 'Over the water came the long, low call of a water-fowl, and the first faint tremor of waking life,' and I knew the magic of the night had gone. I turned, loath to leave. Below, in the Khan garden, a cock crew shrilly, heralding the dawn; then, gathering my trailing garments about me, I hesitated no longer, but fled away from the moonlight and romance of bygone yesterdays, back to the sunshine and banalities of to-day.

"That morning, at a more decorous hour, a merry party met for breakfast in the cool, shady portico; there was much laughter and a little badinage with the secretary who had disturbed my night's rest. The remainder of the day was spent happily sketching and wandering among the ruins, and later we left for Konia, the ancient capital of the Seljuk Sultans, and now the starting-point of the railway to Baghdad.

"As we drove from out of the shadow of the great

stone arches which guard Nicea's ancient capital, I bade a long farewell to those hoary ramparts, encircling her with loving arms, while in the distance illusive shadows clung softly around the lake, veiling her loveliness from view."*

* This article appeared originally in the *Queen*.

CHAPTER IV

KONIA, THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

OUR journey now lay from the old Byzantine site of Nicea (Isnik) to Konia (city of dancing dervishes and ancient capital of the Seljuk Sultans).

To reach Konia from Nicea, it was necessary to break the journey at Eski-Shehir, the junction where various lines branch off to Angora, Konia and Constantinople. Later it was the scene of the vigorous efforts made by both Turks and Greeks as a place of great importance from the standpoint of their military operations, and finally the vital spot where the Greek line was shattered during the Turkish advance to Smyrna. In the old days it was not necessary to loiter longer than was needful to wish it well, and to extol the culinary efforts of Frau Tadia, under whose hospitable roof we rested the night, also incidentally to purchase meerschaum pipes for which Eski-Shehir is famous. These pipes are made from a certain white clay found in the mines near by, thus forever dispelling an illusion that meerschaum is but the "froth and fury of sea foam." . . . A little cool wind fanning my cheek, accompanied by the strident voice of our hostess, awoke me at dawn the following day. Bang—Bang—Bang—on my door, "Lévez-vous, Madame, le train part!" was the startling announcement that precipitated me into my clothes, with alas (as the soldier-boys used to say) merely "a bow to my bath and an apology to my sponge."

Frau Tadia, herself *en déshabille*, her head Medusa-like in snaky curl-papers, was standing on the door-step, gesticulating wildly, and clutching a packet of sandwiches which she thrust into my hand as I flung myself into the vehicle already piled with luggage. Thus amidst agonizing wails from Madame to *dépechez* our departure, we hurried to the station. All day long the train ran monotonously. It was a day of dust and heat, and after my hasty exit from Eski-Shehir, I was like a quivering, jarring string until we reached our destination.

The sun was setting, radiant in crimson beauty, and the shadows were long in the streets of Konia when we arrived. It is here that the Anatolian railway meets the old disputed line towards Persia, and I saw with a "thrill" a train on which was marked in large letters "BAGHDAD" steaming slowly out of the station. Konia has been once, and once only, desecrated, since the Moslem sovereignty, by the feet of Christians. This was by a brief Italian occupation during the Great War.

In a glory of sunshine we sallied forth next day, a burnished dome of blue above us giving a sense of everlasting summer. Everywhere white dazzling houses, interlaced with citron trees, nestled under the shadow of tall palms.

A medley of colour, crimson and green, purple and blue, gold and orange, mixed in the throngs that passed us by, or blended in rainbow tints on booths in the bazaars.

No pavements are ever seen in the streets, but the ground is hardened by the tread of many pilgrim feet, for Konia is a sacred city. Here the great founder of the Milivi dervishes lies buried, and the tomb of Mazerat Mevlana is the scene of yearly pilgrimages by the faithful. There is a legend* that the saint was translated

* The following legend, I think, is from Sir Edwin Pears's book.

to Heaven for a short spell, but at intervals he returns to Earth and becomes visible to his followers. The head of the order (the Chelevi Effendi) has a sacred duty, for to him is reserved the hereditary privilege of girding each newly appointed Sultan with the sword of Osmani, and until this solemn rite has been performed no sovereign can come to the throne of Turkey.

On our way to the Mosque, where the dervishes hold their ceremonies, we met many of the priests from the *Tekke* or convent, wearing their quaint conical caps. Women, with faces wholly hidden, save for one eye, stole shy and curious glances our way, strange ghost-like figures clad all in white, standing sometimes motionless against a wall, " their eyes alone bespeaking a living soul behind " ; little copper-coloured urchins, adorned with strings of blue beads as amulets against the " evil-eye," chased each other laughing through the quivering lights and shadows, or stopped, rubbing one small brown foot against the other, to stare coyly up at us, with big, questioning eyes.

Far away in the distance, on the languorous air, a weird, haunting strain (only heard in the East) came floating towards us, as a string of loaded camels silhouetted themselves darkly against the sky-line.

Grunting and swaying, they filed slowly past, while their dusky Arab leaders crooned vague, elusive chants.

They do not hurry, these people of the Orient ; there is no rush or hustle through the streets, for here Time lords it no longer over man ; he is a thing of no account. Nobody apparently ever wants anything or anybody in particular. They pursue a quiet, care-free existence, perfectly content with things as they are.

Iconium, to call it by its ancient name, has passed through many vicissitudes, having been in the hands of

both Arabs and Mongols, until finally conquered by the Ottoman Turks.

Some of the beautiful old Greek sculptures belonging to its former greatness still remain. Wonderful walls surround the city, and were built to guard the Seljukean Sultans, whose capital it was.

The history of Iconium is bound up also with the early days of Christianity. It was here that St. Paul and St. Barnabas came from Antioch to found a church.

Here, too, Timothy met his beloved master, walking with him in loving converse beneath these same encircling walls, or resting under the fig and olive trees which shadow the entrance to the city.

Finally we approached the Mosque where the dancing was to commence, and were shown into a circular apartment, the floor of which was spread with matting. All round was a gallery on which spectators stood, leaving a space in the centre reserved for the religious ceremony. A limited number of dervishes then began to whirl; others sat cross-legged singing solemn hymns to a weird and minor strain. At first they gyrated slowly, but by degrees the dancing, swaying motions became faster and faster, till they looked like so many spinning tops, with their arms extended, flowing white skirts and brown, conical caps.

Their rapt faces and the strange, haunting music fascinated me, for at these devotional meetings there is a great sense of reverence and sincerity. Many of the dancers had a wonderfully peaceful look, reminding me of pictures of the saints in old cathedral windows. It is an expression of inner stillness gained from a life, no doubt, of contemplation and charity. I was told that the Melivi dervishes lead very pure and holy lives, and are far from bigoted.

The essence of their teaching is love for all men, and

with the simple words "May God be with you" they greet each other. 1367

After all, what does it matter how the great white Truth comes to us? Whether through the symbol of the golden Crescent, or by the image of the wooden Cross—the only vital thing is—that it comes.

In this monotonous way the dancing continued—varied at intervals by one or other of the dervishes sinking exhausted and motionless to the floor; unlike the howling dervishes they do not get excited or foam at the mouth in a frenzy of fervour. Feeling at last more giddy than the performers themselves, we staggered from the building, glad to be again in God's good sunshine.

Much as we wished to linger in Konia, F.'s official duties called us back. Our route once more lay through Eski-Shehir, but this time we branched off to Haider-Pasha and from there crossed to Constantinople.

It is in the quiet English cemetery of Haider-Pasha that a beautiful column is erected to the memory of our soldiers and sailors who fell in the Crimean war. It stands out marble white against the blue of the sea and shaded by cypress trees.

There is not much romance, perhaps, about railway travelling, yet nothing could be more enchanting than our homeward journey by the shores of the Sea of Marmora, in a corridor carriage, from the windows of which one saw miniature islands dotted like an endless lace-work of jewels along the way.

Sometimes the train skirted the top of a high cliff and beneath us clustered tiny villages cradled in a world of green, or we would glide downwards again till we fringed the water's edge (blue as the heart of a sapphire) where yellow, sandy bays curved the coast line, framing a picture of gold and blue.

A warm, mellow, palpitating light vibrated over all,



TIARI MOUNTAINEERS DANCING.

[To face p. 30.

till gradually the islands began to flush rosily to sunset, and from the purpling Western sky " the sun sent scarlet and orange flashes to the smiling Earth, as a signal of ' Farewell.' " It cast a glamour on all around, enveloping Nature in such a dazzling gorgeousness of colour that she seemed for awhile transfigured—then tender moonlight rose in tranquil loveliness over the water, and slowly the smiling Earth sank reluctantly to rest.

Oscan Effendi, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, with whom we found ourselves travelling, entertained me by stories of the Turkish peasants and their primitive habits. He seemed to speak with sincerity of his own love of the country and his hatred of all official life. There, I think, spoke the true Ottoman subject, simple and honest, a child of Nature and a hater of cities.

Alas! the sorrowful shores of this land have bristled with soldiers since those happy days; sturdy Anatolian peasants have been torn from their sun-kissed soil—to bleed, to suffer and to die. The pity of it fills one's heart.

As if by the sweep of a magic wand I awoke next morning to a different world—back to the dinners, dances and endless gaiety of life in Pera. The sweet, free days of liberty and sunshine, where the " great simplicities of life touch one and are known," had vanished.

CHAPTER V

A DINNER-PARTY AT THE ROUMANIAN LEGATION AND THE MURDER OF THE HEIR-APPARENT!

STILL the echo of marching feet and the ring of arms went on through the Ottoman Empire, while Destiny, with measured tread, marched also, drawing ever nearer and nearer. The barometer over Turkey was sinking rapidly; indeed, the political weather was threateningly ready at any moment to burst.

To foreigners, however, it was the merry month of May, with overhead a blue-blue sky, and with long, golden days on the Bosphorus melting into nights of silver star-shine.

Constantinople began to fill with visitors. Amongst the many passing through at this time were the Prince and Princess Alphonse d'Orléans on their way back to Spain. This somewhat unexpected visit occasioned hurried invitations from the Roumanian legation to a dinner and reception in their honour—and none the less delightful all the same, for the Prince and Princess won immediate popularity by their charm. Nevertheless, it caused some heartburning, I remember, at the time—and I had a very genuine speck of sympathy for Monsieur Manu, the Roumanian Minister. Through no fault of his own he was placed on "the horns of a dilemma," for among the dinner guests it was perhaps hardly fitting to invite the French Ambassador (repre-

sentative, as he was, of the Republic) to meet, for example, a prince of the Royal House of Orléans! At the same time, not to include Monsieur Bompard at the dinner as one of the *invité* appeared somewhat of a slight to the French Ambassador.

Monsieur Manu, however, possessed that inestimable gift—tact, and a glib tongue, and managed to smooth matters considerably at the subsequent reception, to which they were invited, when I believe it was carefully explained to Mme. Bompard that the dinner was but a small impromptu affair, merely including the British and Russian Ambassadors with their immediate entourage; this in compliment, of course, to the Princess, who, as a daughter of the Duke of Edinburgh and Marie Alexandrovna, was related on both sides to these two countries. We noticed, however, that the French Ambassadress made very early adieux, thus, I am sure, clearing the strained atmosphere for the Roumanian Minister.

Monsieur Manu's star, however, that evening was certainly not in the ascendant, for the motor-car bringing the Russian Ambassador and Mme. de Giers to the dinner met with an accident. At the last moment the *placement* of the table had hurriedly to be rearranged, and I found myself seated on the left of the Prince, Mrs. Beaumont taking the seat Mme. de Giers should have occupied on his right-hand side.

His Royal Highness spoke English perfectly, and during the course of conversation, strangely enough, the subject of reincarnation was discussed. Turning to me, the Prince remarked: "Madame, do you believe we have lived on this earth before and that we return to it again?" "Sir," I replied, "I do not know. It is difficult to have proof of these things, and I have none." There was a slight pause—then the Prince

continued: "I myself vividly remember my last life, and the manner of my death. I was a humble soldier in the army, somewhere in Italy. With my comrades I was holding a bridge against the enemy, when a sudden spear-thrust pierced my heart and I fell, mortally wounded, into the river beneath." To this I could only murmur in the words of Shakespeare: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

At our Embassy, too, were many visitors. Sir Louis was one of the most hospitable of hosts, and among his guests I recollect was Lady Helen Vincent (now Lady d'Abernon), quite, I think, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. To look at she was a dream; and as "the Dream" she was generally spoken of by her many admirers.

The situation of the British Embassy was perhaps one of the most delightful in Constantinople. It had a large shady garden overlooking the Golden Horn. Here Sir Louis Mallet entertained a great deal; indeed, if I remember rightly, every week there was a big official dinner followed by a dance, at which each of us had to take our turn in acting hostess. This I personally found rather trying, as the dancing generally was kept up to all hours in the morning, and it was impossible to leave until the last guests had gone. At one particular dinner party I found myself placed between two Turks, neither of whom could speak any language but their own. The three Turkish words which I had found so useful at my Harem luncheon did not seem quite applicable to an official dinner party! All round the table was a buzz of conversation, but on either side of me reigned a hushed silence, not altogether golden. The business of food is a desperately serious affair to the Eastern mind, and I noticed my mute and massive neighbour

on the left gazing longingly at the menu. With exquisite tact!—and I may add, an engaging smile (the best I could raise on the occasion)—I handed the menu to him; but alas! being unable to read French, his curiosity was foiled from the outset and his feelings of chagrin gave vent to what sounded to my ignorant ears very like short, sharp barks of disappointment. Later, as the dishes were handed to him, I found to my relief his bark was worse than his bite, for everything on his plate vanished as if by magic.

All this time efforts to make Turkey throw in her lot with the Germans were being made. Baron von Wagenheim was by no means idle. More and more he seemed to be ingratiating himself with the Turks. It was early in June that the celebrated *Goeben* made a diplomatic and well-timed visit to Turkish waters. This was, needless to say, much advertised by the Germans. The *Goeben* had a specially selected crew, and no doubt was meant to make a favourable impression as a show ship. On its arrival there were great entertainments, and for the time being German hospitality and German wine flowed freely in the Ottoman Empire!

All things considered it was thought advisable that we, too, should make a demonstration and show what a British crew was like. Consequently, soon after the *Goeben's* departure, Admiral Sir George Berkeley Milne's flagship, the *Inflexible*, made a visit to Constantinople.

Feelings ran rather high about the two ships, and among the foreigners, naturally, minute comparisons were made as to the fighting capabilities of the *Goeben*, *vis-à-vis* the *Inflexible*, but I think our sailors were the last to anticipate the ships as early antagonists. Without wishing to offer criticism on our Navy (God bless it!) I doubt if the war problems of the Mediterranean in all

eventualities had been thought out or planned with such care as was the case with the German fleet contingent. This, at least, was the impression gained in Constantinople at that time. However, all high Turkish authorities freely visited our battle-cruiser. Amongst other exalted personages was the heir-apparent, Prince Yusuf Isset Din.

It was a memorable occasion, and one I fear hardly fraught with tender memories for His Royal Highness. The sun shone brightly, but the day unfortunately was windy. As his launch arrived alongside of the *Inflexible* an expectant tremor ran down the ranks of the waiting guard. Their agitated captain cast one last look over his men and prepared to give the necessary salute and to start the Turkish National Anthem. However, as fantastic luck would have it, "Man proposes —but the Bosphorus dis-poses!"—the tide, always strong, caught the bows of the Prince's boat and away he waltzed to the first bars of his own National Anthem! Again and again this performance was repeated, pushing off heftily first to one side of the ship and then the other, only to be foiled afresh each time. The band, meanwhile, breathless, perspiring, agitated, stampeded backwards and forwards, *chassez-croisez* from left to right, endeavouring vainly to fall in on the side the Prince haply might gain a secure footing. Eventually, I believe, His Royal Highness was ignominiously hauled up the ship's gangway by a stout party of volunteers headed by the Flag Captain himself!

Prince Yusuf Isset Din was strongly pro-Ally, and no doubt it was due to this fact that he was so foully murdered later. He did not, for instance, see eye to eye with the Committee Party and so it was necessary that he should be removed. The facts of his assassination are not generally known, and the incident happened some time after the war commenced.

In this case the instrument chosen was his aide-de-camp, who had been for many years in his service, but who proved utterly base.

The Prince's entourage, who knew well that this officer had his entire confidence, were told one day that the Prince was ill and desired to be left quite alone, except for his personal confidant. He was then murdered by his treacherous friend, the veins of his arm being opened with a knife which was left lying at his side to make it appear as if he had committed suicide. An autopsy was regularly made by not only Turkish, but German and Austrian doctors, who certified death in accordance with the suicide theory.

Such are the class of men, repugnant to British traditions, but fit associates for German diplomatists, who did not shrink from contact with the lowest of men in Turkey.

CHAPTER VI

NEWS OF THE MURDER OF THE AUSTRIAN ARCHDUKE

IT was June. The season was over in Pera. Already the atmosphere was becoming oppressive. Most of the wealthy inhabitants of Constantinople, together with the diplomatic world, had left for the cool shores of the Bosphorus.

How many at that time, I wonder, dreamed that the door had closed for ever on the old life of Peace (light-hearted and gay)—that soon the curtain would ring up for the first act in the great World drama.

In Therapia there is a pleasant boulevard; a road winding round the shores of the Bosphorus away to the village of Buyukdere. It is here the Russian Embassy is situated, guarding, as it were, the entrance to the Black Sea, to which the road eventually leads. Down this boulevard, in the cool of the evening, we would sometimes wander and join one or other of the little exclusive knots of people gathered in front of the various embassies discussing with animation the vital topics of the day. Everywhere there was a tense expectant feeling in the air, and the consensus of opinion among the diplomats was that affairs were reaching a crisis. Rumours and counter-rumours were whispered on all sides. In fact, the boulevard was fast becoming a sort of long whispering gallery. Alarmist rumours, too, some of them, of the Germans aflame for war and the lust

of battle in many lands. We still entertained and laughed, and seemingly enjoyed ourselves, but it was only on the surface ; beneath smiling faces beat anxious hearts, and from the depths of our souls we prayed that this unthinkable horror called War might yet be averted.

So days melted into weeks and the season took its usual course. There were numerous excursions, either on horseback or driving to the woods surrounding Therapia.• Each embassy had its own yacht (or *stationnaire*), and delightful bathing parties were arranged, sometimes to a beautiful bay at the mouth of the Black Sea. It did not do, however, to linger too long on those enchanting yellow sands, for at sunset a gun was fired from a Turkish fort, and woe betide the unfortunate yacht that had not passed through to the Bosphorus before the sun dipped its curtsy into the water. One had then to pay the supreme penalty and spend the night in the Black Sea, a place which can occasionally be wholeheartedly and conscientiously unpleasant.

One memorable day towards the end of June, a large banquet was given by the Sultan at Yildiz palace, to which the senior personnel of all the embassies were invited. F., with others, went in from Therapia for the night of June 28th, little anticipating that from that moment there would end all sense of tranquillity.

The dinner at the Sultan's palace was given before our naval visitors left, and therefore the Admiral, Sir Berkeley Milne, and all his staff attended. In the middle of dinner a startling message was received announcing the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand at Serajevo ! The Austrian Ambassador, together with other representatives, immediately left the table, and from this point date the anxieties of the future. Speculations and interminable discussions became the order of the day, and immediately F. began to investigate

possibilities as to what would happen should the Austrians attack Serbia. On the 4th of July an imposing ceremony was held at the Austrian church as a memorial service for the Archduke. F. had now to make almost daily visits to Pera to see what he could get out of the Turkish authorities and to consult with his colleagues, a number of whom were not in the habit of spending the summer on the Bosphorus.

July was indeed a tragic month. Everything now seemed trembling on the brink—the brink of what? We held our breath, and the spirit of watchfulness seemed to grow on all faces as we awaited developments. Incidents became frequent, and towards the end of the month we heard of the attempted assassination of the Ex-Khedive Abbas Hilmi. He was, as usual, spending the summer in his yacht on the Bosphorus, but it appears that intrigues had already commenced between him and the Turks on the subject of Egypt.

The plot to assassinate him was as discreditable a bit of work as can be imagined. I do not believe that Abbas Hilmi intended to be hostile to the British in the first instance; at any rate the Turks were not by any means sure of him. Probably he demurred to the Turkish demands, which included a large payment of money, and it is a fact well known that he actually tried all he could to leave Turkey. With its usual crafty methods, the Turkish Government decided to do away with him, and as an instrument for that purpose secured the services of a young Egyptian.

The plot was that this young man should be bribed to kill the Ex-Khedive, when police and gendarmes, who were to be ready on the spot, would immediately cut down the assassin, who would then tell no tales and the righteous indignation of the Turkish Government at the barbarous act would be shown. The plot went

well in so far that the Ex-Khedive was driving one morning in Stamboul; the wretched boy was duly enabled to get to the carriage and to fire three shots point-blank, after which he was set upon and hacked to pieces; but the Khedive was not mortally hit and he recovered!

After this episode, Abbas Hilmi was openly coerced and threatened either to give in to the Turkish demands or to lose his life, and he chose the former course.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRITISH EMPIRE DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY—OUR LIFE AT THERAPIA

THE Bosphorus lay exquisitely peaceful. Not a ripple disturbed the sheen upon its surface, only a soft luminous light hung over the water, melting into the blue of the horizon. That late afternoon in July there was a hushed tranquil feeling in the air. Even the doves were voiceless. Everywhere a lazy stillness reigned, as though Mother Nature had folded the world in her arms and bade it rest.

I was sitting quietly in my garden, an open book on my lap ; not reading, just content to dream idly and gaze up into the thick green shade above my head. It was getting dusk and I was momentarily expecting F.'s return from polo and anxious to hear the latest news.

Presently there was a sound of voices in the garden, and coming towards me I saw F. and a Greek colleague, both in earnest conversation. Their faces were very grave, and turning to me, F. said : " We have just had news of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia "—adding : " This, I am convinced, means war, and now the Turks will at once mobilize." (That was a memorable day for Europe.)

The next morning F. himself paid a visit to Enver



[*From an original sketch by the Author.*

ON THE BOSPHORUS AT THERAPIA.
(A corner of the British Embassy Garden).

[*To face p.* 42.

Pasha and asked him quite frankly whether the Turks intended to mobilize. With his usual non-committal smile, Enver Pasha inferred they had no intention of doing so. Oddly enough, however, it was one of the German Mission who gave F. the desired information, for during an entertainment at the Summer Palace Hotel on August 1st F. was told the Turks would mobilize the following Monday!

The problem now was to find out what this mobilization meant and to what extent it would be carried out. It was shrewdly suspected that the Turks had a treaty with the Germans. Later it was seen that long before the fact was publicly known a Turco-German alliance existed. Meanwhile the Turks continued their farce of being neutral. The Grand Vizier, who had not, I fear, a passion for Truth, repeatedly assured the Allies there was no understanding on their part with Germany.

All the peaceful life of Therapia now vanished. Our pleasant boulevard was thronged with people going and coming from the various embassies. Farewells were inevitable, and daily one witnessed sad and touching partings on the Quai. All the Austrian personnel who were available for mobilization left at once. I was intensely sorry for the Marquise Pallavacini (the Ambassadress); being an Englishwoman, her heart must have been torn in two. Both her sons were in the Austrian Army. She started immediately for Vienna, naturally anxious to see them before they left for the Front. We heard later that owing to her foreign accent her car was held up on the frontier and she and her maid had a narrow escape of their lives.

Every Frenchman, German and Russian able to serve with the colours now departed. F. was daily in conference with the other military attachés, and the crucial

question for them all was the position England would take in the coming war. F. found himself besieged on all sides and, for the time being, extremely popular! In the piping days of peace it was not always so! A delusion still remains in our much deluded native land that foreigners ask questions about the British Army!

It is a simple and touching faith! All they really clamour to know is the latest cut in "smoking"—or the newest colour in ties displayed in Bond Street shop-windows! But now it was a very different matter. Our "contemptible little army" seemed somehow to have gone to their heads. The Austrian military attaché, but more especially the German First Secretary, showed frantic interest in our military arrangements. With earnest eloquence they used to argue (arm linked into arm with F.) how very much Great Britain would gain by standing aloof and remaining neutral. Indeed, Count Kanitz (the First Secretary) went so far as to remark: "Mon cher, England's whole interest for years has been the Irish question and woman's suffrage—of what use then troubling about other people's quarrels? You have got to set your own house in order first." It is remarkable, in recalling these conversations, that not a single German, no matter in however humble an official position, but was allotted his piece to do in propaganda work.

Oh! those long, long days. How heavily the time hung on our hands as we awaited Britain's decision. There was a tension in the atmosphere and a forced calmness in our hearts; everything was now hanging in the balance. A new era had begun in our lives and nothing could ever give back the vivid past. Even the gentle lapping of the waves, the golden days of sunshine and the peaceful magic of the moon, brought no peace

to our anxious minds. War! War!! War!!!—the words beat like a little hammer on my head incessantly. And England—our England—what would she do? We were still, of course, on more or less friendly terms with the Germans, and I remember on Tuesday, August 4th, I had arranged a sketching party with Baroness von Wagenheim, together with one or two others also interested in painting. It was decided to have tea at my house and afterwards to wander up to the golf links above us and sketch a really delightful view of the Bosphorus from that point. What a gorgeous afternoon that was, with just enough breeze to cool the air and to fan our cheeks after our walk. Laughingly, and in friendly fashion, we compared notes and criticized each other's efforts. . . . Then, as the Western sky deepened into orange, we gathered in a little circle and talked—talked, I remember, of many things—or sat apart with clasped hands and dreamed our dreams—glad that the lengthening twilight veiled the shadow in our eyes. That was our last evening in a world of Peace, and wistfully now I look back through the gates of memory, for its fragrance lingers yet. . . .

The next morning the news came of Britain's decision. England had definitely entered the War, and we were no longer on speaking terms with the Germans. From this time onwards only formal salutations were exchanged when members of belligerent embassies met, which naturally was continually occurring within the narrow limits of Therapia. All the various *stationnaires* were now dismantled, and it was a momentous question whether those hurrying to join their respective countries would ever reach their destinations. Many, I believe, never did, but were taken prisoners at sea.

The Germans left with the light of victory already in their eyes, one of the most truculent being Count Kanitz

himself, who promised to send a post card from Paris in a few weeks!—but those few weeks found him a prisoner in Malta! Frankly, I am not revengeful—but really it would have given me an impish enjoyment to have made him my compliments on a post card.

CHAPTER VIII

TURKISH DIPLOMACY

Oh ! British men, in France and Flanders dying
For all that's true,
Your women watch, on you we are relying,
We're proud of you——

We'll smile " Farewell," and tho' our lips may tremble,
We'll smile anew.
We *will* not weep—No, rather we'll dissemble
For love of you !

For love of you, with steadfast, high endeavour
To do our best,
We'll carry on—and know you'll fail us never,
You'll stand the Test.*

THE great offensive had begun !

" In the fields of Flanders, by the sunny slopes of France," already the clash and conflict, the welter and the turmoil of war was raging. But for the first fortnight we received no official news whatsoever, and were unable to contradict the German announcements made personally by the Ambassador to everyone he met. His frantic boastings of what was happening to the British Expeditionary Force caused an eternity of suffering to us all. Presently news of the fall of Liège and Namur, followed by the desperate retreat from Mons, made us hold our breath in an agony of suspense, and the great chain of suffering which links humanity together drew us closer to one another, and oh ! methinks some

* These lines were suggested by some anonymous verses I once read.

of us needed, through those dark days, a lamp within our souls, in whose light to find comfort while waiting for news. All that came through was an unverified report of a naval battle in the North Sea with large German losses. This was unfortunately and regrettably fathered by certain responsible British officials. Later, however, authentic communiqués arrived, and everyone immediately set to work to counter the German propaganda in the Press, though in this respect they had already a long start of us, even before the War.

As though to temper our optimism on the report of a British victory in the North Sea, a bomb suddenly burst in the appearance of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*. These two battle cruisers of excessive speed were, nevertheless, hotly pursued by our plucky little *Gloucester*.

The Germans then asked permission to pass through "the Narrows," which was immediately granted by Djemal Pasha. It was undoubtedly a smart piece of work, but it put the Turks in a seemingly awkward predicament, for, according to the rules of neutrality, they were in honour bound to make the ships leave Turkish waters or disarm and intern them within twenty-four hours.

Sir Louis Mallet, who had been on leave, now returned, and naturally, with the French Ambassador, protested strongly. It was a very serious matter and the air was charged with extremely high explosives! The Allies were entitled to consider this breach of neutrality a *casus belli* and declare war; but I believe Djemal Pasha's cunning saved the situation. At his suggestion it was given out these two units had been sold by the Germans previously to the Turks and the entrance of the ships into the Dardanelles was simply a delivery under contract!

It was distinctly a diplomatic stroke. The Turkish papers naturally made the most of this news, and

spoke enthusiastically of having obtained the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* in compensation for the two ships ordered in Great Britain, of which they had been treacherously robbed. Enver's smile is said to have visibly broadened at this time—indeed, now it was almost "child-like and bland," and that, too, in spite of his anxiety to appear neutral before the Allies. I am told he greeted the entrance of the German battleships into the Straits with the Scriptural words "Unto us a son is born"—more apt, perhaps, if he had *mis*quoted, adding: "Unto us twin sons are born!"

It is a sad reflection to think how constantly the Allies were taken in by the wily Turk, for if they had been really neutral they would have sent the crews back along with the German Military Mission to their Fatherland. This, however, was not at all the Turks' game. They only wished to gain time until their mobilization was complete.

Meanwhile the German crews still remained on the rechristened *Goeben* and *Breslau*, now flying the Turkish flag under the names of the *Sultan Osman* and the *Reschadieh*. Naturally the Allied Ambassadors again strongly protested. Here the method of procedure was once more speedy and original. The German crew jauntily placed red fezes on their flaxen heads and naturalized themselves Ottoman subjects. It was quite simple, and the transformation complete, nothing further could be said. The position of Admiral Limpus, who was in charge of the British Mission, daily became extraordinarily difficult; indeed, shortly it was quite untenable, for the German Admiral Suchon took up his quarters and comfortably installed himself in the Turkish Admiralty, absolutely regardless of the feelings of the British. This was an insult to England, not to be passed over, and our mission was at once recalled.

A much discussed question amongst foreigners at this time was why the British Government did not originally direct our squadron to follow on the heels of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* when they entered the Straits. The Serbs especially realized, I think, the craftiness of the Turks, and were astonished at the omission.

It was quite obvious, however, that the Turks and Germans were working together as allies, though the former still kept up the farce of neutrality. German officers and German mechanics poured into the country, together with war material, via Bulgaria and Roumania, and a German liner, shrouded in impenetrable mystery (but flying the Turkish flag) anchored one morning off the German Embassy at Therapia, and with her wireless, it was strongly suspected, was in communication with Berlin.

I look back with some satisfaction to a cloudless day towards the end of August. We were all down on the Polo ground. The atmosphere had been hot and stifling, and now a slight breeze had risen from the direction of the Black Sea which cooled the air. The game had been particularly exciting. Yusry Pasha, a young Egyptian with whom we were all very friendly, had played magnificently. He had some fine ponies purchased in England, and being a good all-round sportsman was popular with everyone. The game was just over, and the animals being led away. A few people, however, still lingered, standing about idly discussing the game. I was preparing to drive home when a gendarme came up to F., inquiring if anyone was present who spoke German. I think F. was the only person who heard the remark; at any rate he immediately assented and was led up to a little group of Turkish sailors (blue-eyed and fair). In good German they inquired innocently if someone would kindly direct

them back to their ship. They had lost their way and were unable to speak Turkish! Oh! I thought, wolves in sheep's clothing—and mariners of the good ship *Goeben!* Of course F. was charmed to direct them, at the same time taking the opportunity of putting a few questions on his own account regarding their ships.

"Where have you come from?"

"From the Bosphorus Fort."

"How many of you are there?"

"Several hundreds of marine artillerymen from Hamburg."

Round-eyed and wondering, they answered "Ja," or "Nein!" as the case might be, to all F.'s queries, giving what information they knew, which, however, did not amount to much.

By this time other interested spectators had gathered round. Just at this psychological moment I happened to look over my shoulder and saw our good friend Yusry Pasha hurriedly taking one of the seamen aside, warning him that, by an extraordinary turn of fate, he was being interviewed by the British Military Attaché; no doubt also telling him to keep his mouth shut!

It may have succeeded in keeping the German's mouth closed, but at any rate it opened my eyes! To say the least, I was astonished. Yusry Pasha, the man who had dined with us!—the friend of England!! It could only mean *one* thing—he was not to be trusted. I remember mentioning the incident to Sir Louis Mallet, with whom I drove home later, and I know the fact was not forgotten.

Eventually, Yusry Pasha joined the Turkish Army at Erzerum—and so my information proved correct.

CHAPTER IX

AN INTERVIEW WITH ENVER PASHA

THE Turks have a saying: "He who would live at peace must be deaf, dumb and blind." We found it excellent advice, but difficult to follow; more especially as false reports were daily spread by the enemy regarding the situation in France. This was Germany's hour, and "Truth," for the time being, too great a luxury for her to afford. All these lies! some entirely absurd and impossible—I wondered how they took root and grew and flourished so amazingly. The amount of post cards, too, reaching Turkey from Germans already comfortably installed in Paris, was alone worth a king's ransom. There is no doubt that in propaganda work the enemy was "kolossal"!!

But, apart from this, the situation in other respects was not easy. On the 27th of September, the Dardanelles were definitely closed to any traffic and the Ambassador became anxious as to the actual safety of the British in Constantinople. It was thought highly probable that in consequence of the closure of the Straits after the entrance of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, the Allied fleets might take some offensive action, in which case the situation would probably develop in a somewhat dangerous manner, more especially should the mob get out of hand and attack the Europeans. All the Entente *stationnaires* had, of course, left, and we were more or

less now at the mercy of the Turks, with no means of getting away should the need arise.

In case of emergency a stock of rifles was always kept at our Embassy in Pera, and F. was instructed to remove these secretly to Therapia. In conjunction with this, Captain Macauley, the Commandant of the American *stationnaire* (*Scorpion*), and F. together devised a scheme whereby everyone could take refuge in the Robert College at Rumili Hissar, and here the *Scorpion* decided likewise to move so as to afford us protection. A supply of stores was surreptitiously put into the college and each of us warned to be in readiness to leave at a moment's notice, while at the same time we were shown the quickest and most secluded route to the college should danger arise.

Needless to say, I spent many sleepless nights, our house being on the direct road from Constantinople, and one of the first it would be necessary to pass in order to reach Therapia.

Unfortunately, the Fast of Ramadan was now in full swing, and the people especially excited against Christians. The age-long, invisible gulf of hatred between East and West was perhaps at present more in the ascendant than usual on account of the political situation. From sunset to sunrise (the following morning) is, for the faithful, a time of feasting ; their long day's fast is over and they become distinctly convivial all through the night. Lying in bed in the darkness there would often come to my ears the howling cries of the dervishes, together with the jarring raucous music of the bazaars and the beating of tom-toms, and I got very little sleep in consequence. Having also an imagination rather of the cinema type, I saw lurid pictures of infuriated Moslems, their restless forces suddenly let loose, dashing down from Stamboul, and with waving scimitars hacking

their way over my quivering body, for this, to my already heated mind, was their only means of reaching further victims in Therapia! It was not a pleasant sensation, and I had some ugly moments all by my lone self!

Gradually the rifles were brought out from Pera, but to do so without exciting comment was not an easy matter, for the Turks were on the *qui vive*, and distinctly suspicious of our movements. However, it was successfully accomplished, little by little, in several trips on the Embassy launch, the rifles being disguised in bundles of sacking, The only untoward incident happened one day when, just as the last consignment was carried down to the launch, F. came face to face with Djemal Pasha (Minister of Marine), who happened to choose that critical moment to pay a visit to the Embassy! and though we shrewdly suspect he noticed at the time, *Dieu merci*, nothing was said. No doubt, somewhere under his thick black beard there lurked a sinister smile!

Trouble now began to arrive in liberal instalments. Preparations against Egypt by the Turks were becoming very threatening, and F. determined to see Enver Pasha himself at the War Office and to ask him straight out what it all meant. Enver openly admitted that it was certainly legitimate for the Turks to take advantage of any circumstances by which they might regain their old footing in Egypt, but he still affirmed that the Turkish mobilization was only in case of emergency, although Egypt was their main objective in the general situation. It was a pretty idea, but evidently it meant business; and seeing F. still remained seated, seemingly with no intention of leaving, Enver smilingly offered a cigarette and turned the conversation into another channel, remarking casually: "Mon Colonel, I do not think the British Empire can be overwhelmed in the war—but I am convinced the British Force in France will not last

long, for you have no reserves behind it and no machinery in England for raising fresh forces." "Perhaps in a couple of years, Your Excellency," F. replied cheerfully, "we may just be commencing to think of some serious military effort." The conversation then continued on lines generally considered more acceptable to British representatives, namely, the prospects of hunting in the coming winter, Enver informing F. that he was making every effort to encourage sport among the Turkish officers on the same lines as the British!! He was a bit of a cynic, Enver, yet somehow one had a certain admiration for him (the little Napoleon, as he liked to be called), for in comparison with such men as Talaat and Djemal, he was certainly courageous. Usually he appeared in public with his right hand concealed in his pocket, always prepared for any attempt against his life—yet eventually Enver, Talaat and Djemal, all three, met violent deaths.

CHAPTER X

PLOT TO MURDER THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR

SUMMER had fled, and early in October everyone moved back to Pera, thankful to get away, if only a stone's throw, from close quarters with the aggressive German element in Therapia. The continual parade before our eyes of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* was not inspiring, their object being, I believe, to manœuvre in the Black Sea in the hopes the Russians would attack them. But a change had come over the spirit of Constantinople. There was a different atmosphere now in the streets, a sullen look of menace in the eyes of pedestrians as they passed us by, which had been lacking before. The gaiety—the *va-et-vient*—the social life, had gone. Even the main thoroughfares seemed quieter, more deserted. Soldiers no longer clanked up the long hill from Galata. There was no rattle of arms outside *Taxim* (barracks); all had now mobilized, some to Syria, others had gone to the Caucasus; the place was silent and empty.

Still there was warmth and colour and sunshine everywhere. Nature had not changed; nor had the bazaars—they still carried on their barter and traffic. Idlers still hung about or sat smoking in the cafés, and Arab vendors continued to offer bunches of roses, calling as in the old days: "Roses—pink roses from Paradise, buy, oh! buy—They are sweet as a maiden's kiss—Buy, Effendi, buy and appease thy mother-in-law!"

But Life somehow to me seemed eminently unreal, and yet horribly real too. Like Topsy, I felt my mind was all downsides-upsides, and it was difficult to "locate" myself, as our American cousins say.

F. was now having an anxious and busy time. German emissaries were working against the British everywhere. The virile force of their propaganda permeated to Egypt, and F. repeatedly warned the authorities of a project to cut off communications by blowing up the Suez Canal. Finally, his prophecies materialized, and a German reserve officer, named Otto Mors, was caught red-handed. He had been for many years in the Egyptian police. One fine day, however, Mors returned from a trip to Germany, bolder and perhaps more careless; anyhow, F. got information of his whereabouts and at once communicated with Egypt. On arrival at Port Said, Mors' cabin was searched, with the result that he was found to be the proud possessor of many bombs and certain plans for the destruction of the Canal! He was tried by court-martial in Egypt, and, after being publicly degraded, was, I believe, given penal servitude in Malta. I often wondered if he came across our good friend Count Kanitz, who was halting there *en route* for Paris!

All this time, although Constantinople outwardly appeared peaceful, there was an undercurrent of strain —a feeling of watching and waiting. Friendship with the Allies was far from platonic! Sir Louis Mallet was now under no delusion as to the Turks actually coming into the War when the psychological moment arrived. The point was, when this moment would be. It caused him some anxiety, and as a preliminary measure he insisted upon all the ladies of the Embassy leaving Constantinople! I frankly and openly admit this was a bolt from the blue! It went straight home. We had

not expected, nor indeed wished, to leave before our husbands had to do so, but the Ambassador was adamant, and though I found it hard at the time, I can see his point of view. Finally, it was decided I should go to Sofia, which was only twenty-four hours by train from Constantinople, so that in the event of F. being suddenly ordered to the Front I could speed back quickly. Lady Bax-Ironside, our Minister's wife in Sofia, was an old friend, and somehow I felt it would be a comfort at that time not to be with strangers. The Second Secretary's wife, Lady Gerald Wellesley, also decided to go to Sofia rather than home to England, so the matter was hurriedly arranged.

There was no time to pack anything but my personal effects ; everything was left standing in the house ; and at an unearthly hour one morning we left for Bulgaria and so bade a final farewell to Turkey.

But what of those left behind ? They were certainly in some danger. Perhaps one's only consolation at the time was the knowledge that by leaving Constantinople we, in a measure, lightened their burden of anxiety. Nevertheless, our hearts were heavy as the train slowly steamed out of the station.

The Turks were now in a highly inflammable state, strung up to the last pitch and ready for anything, and the Germans, like magicians, seemed to wave their wands and direct their destinies. Baron von Wagenheim and his satellites were constantly goading Turkish officials to adopt strong measures against the enemy aliens in Pera. Our fears did not prove altogether groundless, for the climax came a few days after our departure when Sir Louis Mallet's life was threatened ! The Ambassador had been invited to dine with Mr. Morgenthau at the American Embassy, but a few hours before proceeding to the dinner he received a letter

warning him of a plot to assassinate him that same evening, even going so far as to mention the exact spot the tragedy was contemplated. Sir Louis feigned illness, and thus was saved.

Events after this did not stand still. F., too, was warned not to stay alone in our house at *Taxim*, but to take up his quarters at the Embassy. This he did, and one of the American staff made our house his *pied à terre*, which, for the time being, ensured safety to our possessions.

CHAPTER XI

WAR DECLARED ON TURKEY—I VISIT SOFIA

INSIDE the Circle d'Orient (a rendezvous for most of the diplomatic world in Pera) dinner was in full swing. The hum of voices and the clatter of plates was incessant. Every now and again the doors were thrown open to admit a Turkish or a foreign diplomat, and from the street the distant cries of the vendors, the tramp of feet, or the hoot of a motor-car would momentarily come floating through the room.

In the brilliantly lighted salon men sat in little groups at tables, talking. Djemal Pasha, with a reputation second to none, was freely drinking champagne and surrounded by boon companions. He was not far from where F. was seated, and the latter noticed all were in a convivial mood. Djemal had just turned laughing to a young Turkish officer beside him when a waiter, threading his way through the network of tables, stole up and whispered a message to the Minister of Marine. It seemed to have an electrifying effect, for, pushing his chair aside, Djemal hurriedly left the room without a word to his companions. There was a moment's surprised silence, and then the hum of voices continued as before. But not for long. Others now were hastily summoned to the telephone, and soon it was in everyone's mouth that a naval attack had been made by the

Turks in the Black Sea! This was an arresting piece of news and of supreme importance. Evidently now the Turks meant business. It was War!

There was no time to lose. Motor-cars were hastily summoned, and F. with other foreigners left at once for their respective embassies.

It appeared that Turkish torpedo-boats, commanded by German officers, had sunk some Russian vessels in the Black Sea and bombarded the town of Odessa. The act was entirely unprovoked, and simply done to make war inevitable; many think, arranged by the Germans without consulting either Djemal, Enver, or other Turkish officials. Be that as it may, they all feigned ignorance of the attack.

Monsieur de Giers, the Russian Ambassador, and his staff left immediately. Monsieur Bompard, together with Sir Louis Mallet, at once called on the Grand Vizier and demanded their passports. The Grand Vizier, I am told, was a pitiable little object, trembling with agitation, with tears rolling down his cheeks. He repeatedly assured the Ambassadors of his utter ignorance of the whole matter. He begged for delay. He was positive everything could be explained. But things had gone too far; this last outrage, coupled with attacks near Egypt, finished matters, and on November 1st war was formally declared on Turkey by Great Britain.

All was now over. In the Embassy garden a huge bonfire was burning—the documents and records of British achievements in Turkey for over one hundred years were slowly burning before the eyes of the Ambassador and his Secretaries. It was the funeral pyre of England's vanishing power in the Ottoman Empire.

At this juncture America took over British interests and a guard of sailors from the *Scorpion* was installed

in our Embassy. Sir Louis presented his note at the Sublime Porte and arrangements were made for the English and French staff to leave by special train to Dedeagatch on the night of November 1st. This was not so simple a matter as it appeared. There was a sinister influence at work, instigated by the Germans, and the Turks, being of a kaleidoscopic nature, at the last moment veered round and changed their minds. They determined to make things as difficult as possible for the Allies. At the station was a seething mass of people belonging to the English and French colony, together with the Entente embassies. It was a scene of utmost confusion. The Prefect of Police refused to let F. pass, but thanks to the help of a colleague, his baggage was thrown over the barrier and he himself eventually got through. In the meantime, Monsieur Bompard, the French Ambassador, was having altercations with a Turkish policeman, and to enforce attention he seemed to be emphasizing his remarks by vigorously shaking this minion of the law. Others were having their hats knocked off, or clothing torn; indeed, it was like an international football scrummage. Even Sir Louis almost came to blows with an officious Turk before he was able to board the train. Eventually, however, and entirely due to the efforts of Mr. Morgenthau, the diplomatic train steamed slowly out of the platform, and, metaphorically, I am sure the occupants shook the dust of Turkey from their feet.

For the *un*official foreigners it was a still more difficult matter. Mr. Morgenthau was told that no English or French subjects of military age would be permitted to leave the country. There was nothing to be done, and women and children were perforce stranded on the station for the night, the Turks remaining obdurate. Finally I heard that, thanks again to the untiring work of the

Americans, the foreigners were got off the next day to Dedeagatch.

Meanwhile the days hung heavily on our hands in Sofia. Save for the kind hospitality of Sir Henry and Lady Bax-Ironside, we knew no one in the place, added to which our hotel was not a particularly exhilarating abode. By way of diversion one day we thought we would go to the play. *Hamlet* was to be acted, and this in Bulgarian sounded quaint and original. So armed with a volume of Shakespeare, we hied us to the theatre. The curtain went up. The play began—but flesh and blood could stand no more—leastways, not English flesh and blood and nostrils! The air was heavy, not with the odours of Araby (that we had learnt to survive), but with the more pungent odours of Bulgarie! No spicy breezes these, but smell, pure *smell*, and, speaking in parlance vile (as actors say), it held the house; but it didn't hold us. We fled.

That was our last public performance in Sofia. A few days after there came a wire from F. to the Legation, asking Sir Henry kindly to make arrangements for us to go to Salonica, where we should be met. This meant going through the Serbian war zone, by Nisch and Uskub and from thence to Salonica. We passed over a wonderful single line of railway, shadowed by gigantic rocks, where at intervals of ten yards sentries were stationed to guard the line. Except for negotiating a bridge, recently blown up by the enemy and hastily rebuilt, we had no adventures, and at Nisch our Minister, Mr. Desgrasz (now Sir Charles Desgrasz) most kindly met us.

All the Legations had been obliged to remove from Belgrade, which was being bombarded by the Austrians, and we could hear at intervals the thud of the guns.

Nisch is merely a little Serbian village, and here we had not expected to stay more than a few hours. Unfortunately we had missed our connection and consequently were obliged to sleep the night. It was, I know, a serious and formidable undertaking for the staff of the Legation to find accommodation for us. We were a party of five—with our two maids and a man-servant. The Chancery was temporarily in a little house in Nisch, but with generous hospitality the staff turned out for our benefit and even gave a dinner in our honour that same night. Lady Gerald was too tired to accept, but I had a most enjoyable evening, and met several acquaintances. At sunset the next day we continued our journey to Salonica. Everything was done to make things comfortable for us, and the British Consul at Uskub warned to do all in his power to smooth our way.

I slept peacefully until the first grey streak of dawn was brightening the sky—then a sudden jerk awoke me. Evidently we had reached Uskub, for with frantic convulsions and ear-piercing whistles the train halted. There was a light tap at the door of my compartment, and, thinking it was my maid, I drowsily murmured, "Come in." Imagine then my feelings when no less a personage than the Consul himself stood framed in the doorway. Stepping lightly into my cubicle, he breezily wished me "Good morning" and *sans gêne* settled himself down for a talk at the foot of my couch. This was indeed smoothing the way for us, I thought, with a vengeance; but my maid (who at that moment entered) whispered encouragingly, "Madame is most suitably attired in a *crêpe-de-chine négligé*," and thus comforted, I felt able to face the somewhat embarrassing situation.

It seems the kind little man had come expressly to

tell us the latest news from Constantinople, for which we were extremely grateful. After a heart to heart talk on the political situation, with many apologies for disturbing my rest he departed.

Some hours later we reached Salonica. Here we found Lord Gerald Wellesley and F. waiting our arrival. The naval dispatch-boat *Hussar* was alongside the quay ready to convey us to the Piræus. Originally it had been sent for the Ambassador to Dedeagatch, but the latter preferred a somewhat larger vessel and so took ship in a Messagerie steamer straight to Marseilles. Many a time this compliment has been whispered in my ears by gallant foreigners: "Madame, you English, you are wonderful! All are born sailors!" No doubt they are, but for the credit of England, I am thankful no aliens were aboard the brave *Hussar* that "dirty night" we swept the Aegean Sea in one of H.M.'s gunboats! And here for the honour of all concerned let me add—only the personal equation comes into my tale of woe.

In spite of honours thrust upon me, for I was allotted the Admiral's cabin, the rockiness of my brain, combined with the nautical movements of the dashing *Hussar*, made me fail to appreciate this honourable position. At seventeen knots an hour we ducked and plunged and rolled through a welter of water. The minutes of the night swung on—and I swung too, but—in and out of my berth! It was a busy time! The champagne touch had completely gone. There wasn't a sparkle left in me, and it was but a sorry worm, I fear, crawled from "me Lord High Admiral's" cabin the next morning. . . .

At last—at long last,—timbers ceased from shivering and the billows were at rest. We had reached the

Piræus! Once more I placed both feet firmly on solid earth and thanked *le bon Dieu* I was born a land-lubber!

I'd face a wounded tiger!
I'd scorch 'neath alien skies!
I'd even sleep in deserts wild
And cope with sand and flies!
But put me on a gun-boat
Across the Aegean Sea,
Steaming seventeen knots an hour,
And little's left of me!

CHAPTER XII

MEMORIES OF GREECE

I seem to hear you whistling
 In the same old cheery way.
Still I hear your laughter echoing
 All about the house to-day.
There was never room for sadness.
 Your presence cleared the air.
You had but to come in smiling,
 Tall and slim—and debonair.

You were such a boon companion;
 Just a sportsman of the best.
And you met your death most nobly,
 For you stood the final test.
Just a type of England's manhood,
 Just a pal most staunch and true.
God grant that when I meet my Fate,
 I meet it—straight—like you.

SO this was Greece! Greece, the land Byron loved—the land where Sappho sung; and yet, was it Greece? I began to doubt. The whole of Constantinople seemed to have emptied itself into the streets of Athens. At the Hôtel Grande Bretagne, where we stayed, familiar faces smiled at me from the dining-room or ascended with me in the lift. Refugees from the land of Turkey loomed everywhere; it was Pera over again, but this time in Grecian setting, with the Acropolis, instead of the Bosphorus, for a background.

What is there, I wonder, in Athens that appeals? It is hard to tell. The town is quite modern with just

the ordinary wide thoroughfares and shady boulevards of most Continental cities. The crowd, too, is colourless, except for the note of picturesque barbarity given by the Evzones (the late King's bodyguard). These are all picked men, smart and soldierly in their white pleated Fustanéllas standing stiffly out, much resembling a ballet skirt. With these they wear a zouave coat and a red fez adorned by a long blue tassel, set jauntily on their heads. Their feet are shod in quaint shoes, turned up at the toes, on the points of which are gay rosettes. Many admiring glances follow them as, with swaying kilts, they swagger past. There is vivid interest everywhere, but an interest tempered by much noise,—for noise, like the poor, is always with you in the streets of Athens. Motor cars hoot incessantly. The gurgling note of a Ford as it hurries by, or the throaty horn of a Mercedes, mingles in a bewildering fashion with the shouts of *Loústros* (boot blacks) who beat their brushes on small wooden boxes to attract attention, calling insinuatingly to American tourists, "*Kýrie* (Sir)—*Kýrie* (Sir), have a shoe-shine!"

Now and again a newspaper boy, like a little Greek statuette, will dart perilously into the traffic, shouting his wares, or a *Papas* (priest), in flowing black garments and strange cylinder-shaped hat, passes by, adding a touch of dignity to the ever changing scene. It is mostly, however, in the open cafés the people congregate; here the Athenian loves to sit sipping his *oúzo* or *masticha* and smoking countless cigarettes; it is here with expressive gestures he transacts his business—arranges a marriage for his daughter or discusses with heated arguments the affairs of state, for the Greeks are a chatty people and prone to politics. It is all quite modern, and yet there is something, I think, distinctive about Athens which, to my mind, distinguishes it from other cities—an atmosphere charged perhaps with the spell

of bygone ages which somehow creeps into the blood and holds one.

Sitting alone on my balcony that same evening I looked across the twinkling lights of Athens—away—away to the great Acropolis silhouetted against a crimson sky. Golden clouds drifted over the horizon, and in the fading light they seemed to take to themselves strange shapes. My imagination ran riot. To me, once more the Gods came forth from their Olympian heights and the lambent air seemed filled with music and poetry. I felt the Muses lived again. Presently one rosy cloud detached itself from its fellows and, passing swiftly behind the Parthenon, bathed the columns in liquid gold. Surely it was none other than the great Sun-god Phœbus himself, driving his chariot athwart the heavens and flashing to Pallas Athena a signal of Farewell.

Unable to tear myself away, I lingered until the shadows grew long on the Acropolis, purple shadows creeping up the Hill of Mars where years ago St. Paul preached to the men of Athens; . . . still I lingered as the moon rose higher and higher over the sacred hill until it hung suspended just above it, like a holy silver ikon.

The next day we saw Home papers—had the Home letters—heard the Home news! Sad news, alas! for some of us. It was here Lord Gerald Wellesley heard of his gallant brother's death in France, and here, in the Roll of Honour, we saw the names of friends known long ago in the happy days of Peace. To me, their names seemed to stand out as though printed in letters of gold. Yes, " stronger than Death, and above Life," and never to be effaced—but—*how* it hurt. How horribly it hurt —the aching thought that never again should we clasp their hands—never smile a greeting to one another. A shadow fell over my soul, and somehow the world had grown darker.

After a few days in Athens we all went our different ways, the Wellesleys to Rome, and F. to Egypt, there to present his reports on the Turkish Army, eventually leaving for the Gallipoli Front.

So the clouds of war rolled on and on, with here and there a rift between when for a fleeting second we saw "the light of Peace—like a sudden gleam of sunshine."

Thus for a moment's space I have lifted the latch and lingered at the Gates of Memory to gaze once more upon those distant scenes.

PART II

MESOPOTAMIA

CHAPTER XIII

ARRIVAL IN INDIA—UP THE PERSIAN GULF TO IRAQ

"COME over to Mespot for a week and see it."

This was the startling invitation sprung on my astonished ears two days after I had landed in Bombay. The Great War being over, my very energetic husband had come from Iraq to meet me; he was due to return in a few days' time, having intended meanwhile to install me comfortably at a Hill station in India during the hot weather.

"All you will require is a cabin box," he continued airily, "for the dear motherly War Office at Home won't allow you to remain longer than a week!"

(No military officers' wives were permitted to live permanently in Mesopotamia under the War conditions still ruling there at that time, though, strangely enough, political officers were allowed to have their families with them.)

My brain began to reel, and I thought "furiously" for a few moments. It was now the merry month of May—hot, yes, "hot too much," as my little ayah used fervently to remark when bringing my tea in the morning. It meant five days going up the Persian Gulf in a particularly unpleasant and sticky atmosphere to spend—what? Just one lurid week in broiling Basrah. Was it worth while I asked myself?—moreover, with the long, long trek back ALONE! I began to waver, to

hesitate. No! I could not do it—but just then I looked up and caught F.'s eyes anxiously fixed on my face. Like a flash I divined his thoughts—Had I changed? (he was thinking). Was the old spirit of adventure still alive in me?—the *joie de vivre* which had carried us through many varied experiences in the old days? Or had the long years of separation and war-strain killed it all? Impulsively I turned, and placing both my hands in his, answered, "Yes! I'll go"—just like that. Thus my fate was sealed. Destiny is a capricious mistress and Life's great issues are oft-times decided by a glance!—a heart-throb!—or a smile!

I will not enter into details of our run up the Persian Gulf; it was monotonous, perhaps; hot, most distinctly; and rough at all times! But then, was I not journeying to the cradle of the World? to Ur of the Chaldees?—to Babylon—to Nineveh? I thrilled at the thought. Here, indeed, was the very soul of adventure, an opportunity not to be missed.

My ignorance, however, was colossal! So during the voyage I determined to improve my mind by a course of Scripture reading! Armed with a Bible, I began to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" much that I had forgotten. As I followed the old Bible stories of Noah—of Daniel in the lions' den—they no longer appeared vague and shadowy personalities: they lived again, and glowed with a new reality here in their own land and setting. It seemed incredible that in a few days, perchance a week at most, I should be breathing the self-same atmosphere as the ancient prophets, gazing at scenes upon which Jonah must have looked, walking, perhaps, in the actual desert in which Hagar and Ishmael wandered. Europe, civilization, and all the empty tyranny of modern life seemed to fall away as I pored over my Bible, reading into it a new and vital interest.

CHAPTER XIV

ACROSS THE BAR INTO THE SHAT-EL-ARAB

BANG ! Bang ! ! Throb ! Bang ! !

I was awakened one morning by hearing these unearthly sounds clamouring around me. I sat up and listened. Then came a grating noise, as though the ship was being disembowelled ! What could it mean ?

I jumped from my berth—the engines panted and puffed as if out of breath, or engaged in a titanic struggle with some sea monster.

" Well," thought I, " 'Ready, aye ready'—and for all emergencies—is a safe working motto in the East."

I donned my clothes accordingly, at the same time, to quote an Arab proverb, " I strapped the shoes of haste on to the feet of duty," and scrambled up the companion-way, banging violently into F., who was coming *down*, and who casually remarked *en passant* that we were at the moment passing over the bar. This caused me a revulsion of feeling, and steadying my already wayward limbs, I continued my ascent in a more dignified and decorous manner.

On the deck I found most of the passengers already assembled, intent on watching us negotiate the barrier which divides the Persian Gulf from the Shat-el-Arab. There is only, I believe, some eighteen feet of water over the bar at high tide, and at low water, of course, considerably less. So, having forced our way through the

soft mud with what seemed the last expiring effort of the engines, we slipped into the river. At its extreme entrance is the telegraph station of Fao, and one can see quite distinctly the remains of a Turkish fort which was demolished by our Indian Expeditionary Force when they attacked Basrah early in the war.

On the left bank is Abadan, where the great oil refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company are situated. Masses of chimneys belch out black smoke which, mounting the still air, shapes itself into fantastic forms—like battalions of dark thunder-clouds against an azure sky. Acres of ugly tanks in the foreground and everywhere an odour of oil fuel or gasolene—is the impression I carry away of Abadan. It is not a happy memory, and without regret I saw its ugly chimneys melting into the blue.

For the next two hours we glided smoothly up the Shat-el-Arab. On either side of the banks are plantations of date and palm trees, with here and there cool-looking creeks, shaded and green—but the country is flat and uninteresting, with only occasional patches of sandy desert to break its monotony.

At the entrance of the Karun River, half way to Basrah and still on the Persian side, lies Mohammerah, a little oasis of green. This is the headquarters of the Persian Oil Company. It boasts, I believe, quite a large community of Europeans, and has a British Consul and Vice-Consul—the former under the immediate authority of H.M. Minister at Teheran. The present town is situated on the former Turco-Persian border, and consequently in the old days proved a bone of contention between these two powers until a boundary commission decided it should belong to Persia.

An important and somewhat interesting personage is the Sheik of Mohammerah, who, though under the



[*From an original sketch by the Author.*

A VIEW FROM THE OLD RIVER FRONT HOTEL, BASRAH.

[*To face p.* 70.

Persian Government, claims a certain independence and maintains at his own expense, so I was told, a permanent guard of Persian levies about four hundred strong.

Towards midday we arrived at Magil, the usual military disembarking station. To me it seemed the embodiment of desolation—sand, glare and débris everywhere—with bales, cranes and iron girders for unloading strewn in wild confusion on the ground—no doubt the chaos and aftermath of war!

It was a trial of patience, standing in the pitiless heat on deck and waiting for some conveyance to take us ashore, the distance between Basrah and Magil being about five miles.

Colonel Senior, the A.Q.M.G., most thoughtfully, however, brought his motor-car, and drove us to the River Front Hotel.

The River Front Hotel at Basrah, from all accounts, was the pride of Mesopotamia, the building of which (like Solomon's temple) had been an epoch-making event, and had cost, I believe, a cool £2,000. Consequently I was looking forward to the last word in luxury.

As we drove up under its large portico, my feelings received their first rude shock! Here was no Ritz Hotel, no palace of the Arabian Nights with marble courtyards and shaded gardens! Not at all! On the contrary, a plain long building, two stories high, with deep veranda, met my astonished view. I gasped; but, noticing the pride with which both the A.Q.M.G. and my husband handed me out of the car and pranced up the steep stone staircase, I held my tongue. Not for worlds would I have dashed their evident pride in one of the sights of Basrah. So, consoling myself with the thought that no doubt the bedrooms would be all the heart could desire, I followed with chastened footsteps.

Picture, then, my final disillusionment! I was ushered into a room from the walls of which the plaster was peeling—two chairs, two hospital beds and a looking-glass. *Voilà tout!!* With a sickly smile I turned to F. and asked if the window curtains had been forgotten?

"Curtains! Curtains!!" he replied, in crescendo tones, evidently surprised and hurt. "What do you want with curtains? Look! there are sheets on the bed!"

I remained tongue-tied. Here was a new view of life. I felt my cup of happiness was full, to brimming over!

Three years later, returning to Basrah on our homeward journey, I understood F.'s astonishment at my seeming unreasonableness; for, to eyes fresh from the desert, the River Front Hotel was palatial to sumptuousness! So, perhaps, after all, Einstein is right—it is merely a question of Relativity!

CHAPTER XV

BASRAH—"CITY OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS" AND OF SINBAD THE SAILOR

FEW places have teemed with so much interest in history as Mesopotamia, or Iraq, as it is now called. The "Cradle of the World" has no classic memories like Greece or Rome, but its ancient records and great life episodes have been written on the hearts of mankind, and its history, I think, has been the Bible of human nature.

At the extreme northern fringe of the Persian Gulf lies the port of Basrah. The city was founded by the second Caliph, Omar, in the seventh century.

A still more ancient town, however, is said to have existed on the site of the present Zobeir, some way out in the desert to the south-west. The old Zobeir Gate and a few ruined towers which still remain, are all that is left of its former grandeur. This is, no doubt, where —tradition alleged—Sinbad the Sailor was carried on his magic carpet to escape the perils of the gigantic "Roc"! And, also, probably the scene of many romantic tales told from the Arabian Nights.

In our day the more modern town became unromantically familiar to our weary troops, who, after having marched and fought through slime and mud, wounded and footsore, entered Basrah on the 23rd November, 1914—one of the many instances during the great

war of British grit and determination. Since then, our Army of Occupation has left its mark! For, the wharves along the river are laden with barges, steamers, pleasure launches and ocean vessels, and there is a sense of life and business everywhere.

Basrah is a land of fierce heat in the summer months, the thermometer rising sometimes as high as 127 degrees in the shade (Fahrenheit), and yet, withal, it is a land of date groves and little shaded creeks, where quaint boats flit up and down the waterways carrying their merchandise, and "where mellow-tinted houses, latticed windowed, dip to the water's edge." These have, usually, projecting balconies painted green, or blue, or yellow.

Here, in the cool of the evening, the belles and *bints** of Basrah (mostly Jewish and Christian girls), sit and gossip, looking to all the world like a garden of tulips in their bright coloured *abbahs*†. It is only since the British occupation, however, that they have dared to deck themselves in these vivid hues; for, under the Turkish regime, anyone seen richly attired walking in the streets of Basrah was liable to have his clothes plucked off him (and that not too gently) by avaricious "passers-by." The Arab women, on the contrary, are usually dressed in dark colours. Only in the seclusion of their harems do they don brighter apparel.

Now and again one sees a graceful *bellum* (native boat) glide past, under whose gay awning veiled women chat and laugh as their dusky gondoliers propel them lazily down stream.

Much of the traffic is done by water, and, for this reason, Basrah is sometimes called the "Venice of the East."

With feelings very much akin to what, I imagine,

* *Bints*—Arabic for girls.

† *Abbah*—a loose cloak worn by the Arabs.



A River Scene at Basrah.

[To face p. 80.

Noah's must have been when he stepped from the ark, I sallied forth next day into a world of water! The rainy season had left the place a veritable swamp; only the principal thoroughfares remained respectably dry, while on either side, where the ground declined, water had remained, forming miniature lakes in which the roots of endless date trees were submerged.

A strange sight met my gaze, for, wherever an elevated piece of ground was obtainable, the Khurdish Labour Corps had pitched crude-looking tents in picturesque dirt and damp, each family apparently possessing a small mud island of its own. Here they lived, isolated, but seemingly perfectly contented, the women laughing and calling to each other in an uncouth tongue, while naked little urchins disported themselves merrily in liquid mud! "Some" mud-larks indeed! Towards evening it was still more picturesque to watch these wild gipsy folk cooking their meals, the blue smoke from their glowing fires rising through the date trees, and behind the setting sun painting with crimson and orange the tall palms, and casting fantastic shadows on the water.

A hectic week of dinners and dances, nerve-racking picnics up the creeks in strangely wobbly *bellums*, with occasional saunters through dimly lighted bazaars, and the end came at last. I had to consider thoughts of flight, or be told politely that the air of Iraq did not agree with me!

How often the unexpected happens!

We were sitting, F. and I, on the long wide veranda one hot breathless evening, sipping cool drinks and talking sadly of my return journey, when, lo and behold! from nowhere in particular a white-robed figure suddenly stood salaaming before us, and handed to F. a telegram—whereupon the vision vanished into the shadows again as mysteriously as he had appeared.

The telegram was from the G.O.C., Sir George MacMunn, at Baghdad, offering F. the post of Commandant at Baqubah, a camp about thirty miles to the east of Baghdad. Here we would have no less than forty-five thousand Armenian and Assyrian refugees to look after (about half the population, I should say, of the Isle of Wight). These unfortunate people had fled from Van and Northern Persia. Hotly pursued and massacred (men, women and children) alternately by Turks, Khurds and Persians, they had arrived in a terrible condition, and were at the present moment being cared for and fed at the expense of the British Government in the desert at Baqubah.

It was a big undertaking. Moreover, the staff of officers at the camp was being considerably reduced; this would, of course, greatly augment the work. F., however, did not hesitate to accept the post—responsibility was never a duty he shirked. At the same time he knew that in the near future the care of the refugees would come under the Civil Administration, and that, as Commandant, he would of necessity be lent to the Political Department. To my untutored ears, this sounded much like a book out of a lending library. But F. seemed quite pleased, so I supposed that it was the usual proceeding.

"You see," he remarked, "as a civilian's wife you will now be graciously permitted to remain in Mespots!"

"What!" I exclaimed, beaming from ear to ear. "No longer a woman of importance to the War Office?"

F. grinned and nodded.

Well, life still held its compensations! A new world was opening out before me, and that, too, under conditions I had never as yet experienced. Would I pine for the fleshpots of Egypt? for my fellow humans? or would the lure of the desert call me as it had called

Father Abraham and Moses and all the other ancient worthies at the Dawn of Time ? I wondered !

Here my musings were rudely interrupted by F. inquiring tentatively, not to say baldly, how long my clothes would hold out ? (Men are so matter o' fact.) It was a most delicate question, " God only knowing," I replied distractedly, " what can do ? " and began feverishly in my mind to count up my garments—possibly clothes were more or less a negligible quantity in the desert. Still I could not quite ignore conventions. How start life with one small cabin trunk, when the climate " every day and in every way " was getting hotter and hotter ! That was the problem ! !

" If you can hold out for a fortnight or three weeks," said F. encouragingly, " your boxes will certainly arrive."

" Amen," I replied fervently.

Thus was I lulled into a false security, not to say reckless extravagance, in the way of " undies "—but to cut a long story short, I never saw my precious boxes again, no, not even their labels ! All were stolen on their way to Baqubah, and bang went £200 worth of clothes, furs and jewellery, for which I got no compensation. It makes me feel cross-like still, to think of fat Arab ladies in some distant Pasha's harem being arrayed in " my purple and fine linen." " *Inshallah !* " Man proposes—but the Arab disposes !

CHAPTER XVI

UP THE TIGRIS—THE GARDEN OF EDEN

IN order to get to Baghdad, it was necessary for us to take a small steamer up the Tigris as far as Kut-el-Amara, a distance of about one hundred and thirty miles from Basrah, which usually took five days —the railway at that time not having been carried through to Basrah.

So one glad May morning, Little Box, Band Box, Bundle and I were conveyed by a joyful husband up the river in a launch to Magil, there to be transhipped on to one of the many flat-bottomed steamers that ply up and down the Tigris with passengers and merchandise.

These steamers, in fact all shipping on the Tigris, are divided into classes, each class having a large letter painted on its bow or funnel. There are "S" boats—"P" boats—"S. T.'s" (steam-tugs)—"P. T.'s" (paddle-tugs)—and so on, *ad infinitum!* In fact, every person and thing in Mesopotamia seemed to have its own particular initial. People spoke to me gaily of "I. W. T.'s" (meaning Inland Water Transport Officers), to whose tender care were entrusted the river craft—of "L. P. O.'s" (Local Purchase Officers)—of "A. P. O.'s" (Assistant Political Officers)—and in the course of conversation, such household words as "B. O. R.'s" and "I. O. R.'s" (British Other Ranks and Indian Other Ranks) were continually being hurled at my head, until,

combined with the heat and mental strain, my brain seemed to be bubbling inside. With humility, I admit that I did not even *look* intelligent (the italics, without prejudice, are mine !).

Our valuable lives and luggage were now entrusted to " S.50," one of the best class of steamers (so its captain assured us). " It had begun its adventurous career in India, somewhere in the dark ages before the war, and had lived a care-free existence on the Brahmapootra River, until, along with many others, it was ' called up ' for more active service on the Tigris."

But the flower of all the river craft was undoubtedly the " S.1." This was rightly allotted to the General for his many trips up and down the river.

We were all aboard by noon, and after our kit had been stowed away in a miniature cabin (with a clean, but pervading odour of tar !), F. and I strolled on deck and prepared ourselves for five days of absolute idleness. The upper deck (on which one practically lived) was divided into two parts, half being allotted to passengers and ship's officers, while the other half was occupied by a contingent of Indian troops who were going to Amara. The lower deck was mostly given up to live stock of every sort, and *there*, alas ! was where our cabins were situated.

As the heat got more and more oppressive, a portion of the upper deck for'ard was screened off with a sail for me to sleep at night. This was delightful ; but the mornings were a problem ! How to emerge from my " crow's nest " (as they nicknamed my sleeping corner) without running the gauntlet of half a dozen " I. W. T.'s " was a nerve-racking proceeding.

The first night we tied up, and flashed searchlights right and left, it being impossible to go through " the narrows " above Basrah after dark. The Shat-el-Arab

before this, however, is deep and wide, with palm groves on either side.

Early the second morning, before the sun rose and there was only a sort of goldenness in the air, we turned a bend in the river and away to the left was the Garden of Eden, or Qurnah, as it is now called. Oh! shades of one's First Parents! What blind obsession dimmed your clear vision, that you should have named the place a Garden? The only gardens were date gardens spreading over the flat banks—date trees dipping to the water's edge, date trees, and still more date trees everywhere, and not the vestige of a flower or a blade of grass to be seen.

"Oh!" I murmured disappointedly, misquoting the lines on Shah Jehan's Tomb:

> "If on Earth be an Eden of bliss,
> It's not this, it's not this, it's not THIS!"

F. laughed and replied, "No, indeed! It's the hottest place in Mespots, and when I was Commandant there (Commandant—Ye Gods!—of the Garden of Eden) the Tommies called it the 'Garden of Hell.' I assure you we needed no flaming sword to keep us out whenever we had the chance to get away, even though my quarters were hard by Temptation Square (the most important centre of Qurnah)."

At Qurnah the Euphrates and Tigris meet, the former branching off to the left. Leaving the Shat-el-Arab behind us, we pursued our placid way up the Tigris. Here the river becomes muddy in most parts, except when a gentle breeze crinkles its surface, when it takes on beautiful opalescent hues, shimmering in the sunlight, and breaking into a thousand red, and green, and blue ripples.

The river's course now runs through flat, wide plains

composed entirely of alluvial soil, and is apt to change its channel, thus making navigation, in some parts, extremely difficult. During the rainy season the country, in certain localities, becomes a lake, through which it is no easy task for boats to find a passage; while, during the dry summer months, there is often danger of grounding on the constantly shifting shoals of mud.

The banks on either side are mostly treeless. Here and there one saw little encampments of tattered tents or mud huts belonging to Arab shepherds, but the scenery on the whole was monotonous, with drab, colourless effects of browns and greys.

When the evening lights come out, however, the whole landscape seems transformed. The smouldering sun sinks below mud banks, and casts a spell of mystery over the land, flinging violet and orange ripples on the water. I can still feel the intoxication of those Arabian Nights. Then, I confess, Mesopotamia gets into one's blood with a delicious subtle madness, the while the great white moon comes creeping up and the starshine glints upon the water.

Somehow, here in the "Cradle of the World," after the glare and heat of the daylight hours, Nature relents at eventide, and with tender fingers smooths out the many sand-papering cares she has inflicted during the day. Then, methinks, the night wind sings silently of the river's ancient glories—tales wonderful and passing strange, which the wise old Tigris knows!

CHAPTER XVII

EZRA'S TOMB

UNHEEDED, the days melted one into another. The lazy indifference of the East had taken hold of us. We lay in our deck chairs idly dreaming through the long hours, watching the sky and water. What matter if it was this week, or next, or a thousand years ago? We did not care—we were lotus-eaters on an ancient river, and Time was no more. Quite suddenly, one morning round a loop of river, we caught the sunlight on a blue dome surrounded by palm trees. It was Ezra's Tomb.

At once we were galvanized into life again. Alas! there was no possibility of landing, much as I longed to do so, in addition to which, lashed to each side of us, were two huge barges laden with fodder and iron which we were laboriously taking into Amara, and to stop would have been impossible.

While we were looking with longing eyes at the shore, and gazing in admiration at the monument which stood out like a blue jewel embedded in the green velvet of the trees, the captain strolled quietly up and leaned over the ship's rail beside us.

"It's a wonderful monument," he remarked, "and one of the oldest in existence. I believe it has been to some extent added to, and partly rebuilt. Ezra, the Scribe, died here, they say, on his way from Jerusalem to Susa (*i.e.*, Shushan of the Bible)."



EZRA'S TOMB ON THE TIGRIS.

[*To face p.* 88.

"You see that mosque?" he continued. "That was erected by the Arabs adjacent to the tomb."

"But," I asked, surprised, "do not the Jews object?"

"On the contrary," he replied, "the Moslems hold Ezra's burial-place in great veneration, and both Jews and Mohammedans make pilgrimages to the sepulchre."

I had forgotten for the moment that a large portion of the Old Testament is sacred to Islam as well as to ourselves, and I suppose, when one comes to think of it, Abraham came from this part of the world. So, naturally, Mohammedans claim some interest in a few of the ancient worthies.

Our river journey was now drawing to a close. Amara, which lies on the east bank, we reached at midday. Here we tied up for the night. At that time Amara was the principal supply depôt between Basrah and Baghdad. The quays and wharves were full of shipping, giving the place an appearance of life and movement.

We went ashore at once, for F. had to inspect some Turkish prisoners of war, and while he was lunching with the Commandant, I took the opportunity of exploring the bazaars in search of the celebrated Amara work, of which I had heard so much. It is done by people called Sabeans, descendants of the ancient Chaldeans. This industry consists of silver articles of all sorts, curiously engraved in black enamel, the secret of which is said to have been handed down from father to son since the day of Nebuchadnezzar!

The bazaars are usually narrow and dark, and losing myself in a labyrinth of turnings, I began to despair of ever finding the silver bazaar, when, to my surprise, I heard a voice behind me saying "Khanoum! Khanoum! I your man."

As one seldom hears English in the Arab quarters, I turned and saw the most minute urchin clad in a flowing yellow garment, red leather shoes turned up at the toes, and a jauntily placed scarlet fez on his head. There and then I should have liked to pick him up and hang him on my watch chain. What a mascot he would have made! With bright, twinkly black eyes, he repeated, "I your man, Kanoum; you no fear, I show you very good shop."

Meekly I followed, and eventually found that he was the son and heir of the old Sabean whose family jealously guarded the secret of this industry. Father and son rooked me of several rupees, and armed with my purchases I returned to the ship—only to be told that I should have got the articles purchased for about half the price I had paid!

That night I slept not at all. I was awakened by a violent blow on the cheek! Another, and yet another!! I found, to my surprise, locusts in the air! Locusts on my clothes! Locusts everywhere—it was a plague of locusts! This uneven battle between us continued for about ten minutes, when they disappeared as surprisingly as they had come. But, for me, it was a night of "watching and waiting." I expected the enemy to return to the charge every moment.

Certainly the sun *can* shine in Mespots! Make no mistake about that! The second day out from Amara was the hottest I ever experienced. If someone had kindly placed a snowball on my burning brow, I am convinced that my brain would have continued at boiling-point and steamed like a kettle!

That evening, at dinner, our conversation turned on the war. We were seated, as usual, round the table in our little mess cabin (amidships). At the moment we were passing the Shumran bend of the river, near

Sunnyat, those historic reaches where the most ghastly battles had been fought in trying to relieve General Townshend.

It was now only the end of May, and to me the heat seemed unbearable.

In this sun-baked country, devoid of all shade and open to the enemy, what must our troops have suffered through those unspeakable August days. Wounded and footsore as they were, mad, too, with thirst, and blinded by sand, they continued to fight their way along the river bank, grimly determined at all costs to reach their comrades in Kut. The pity of it! And the failure!! Then, one day—the climax! Out from Kut a gallant band of starving, emaciated men came forth, prisoners in the hands of the Turks! Their sufferings I will not attempt to describe. Only those who have had dealings with the Turks can even guess. Out of the hideous welter and chaos of those early days of war, one sees how bitter was the sacrifice—how great the price we paid. The blood of our soldiers seemed to cry to us from the pitiless sand, as had the blood of Abel long ago.

They were unforgettable memories, and still very fresh to some of us.

We were very quiet that evening. Gradually the talk died down. The lights remained unlit, and, in the dusk, the men sat round silent, smoking and thinking. Yes, thinking, I know, long, long thoughts about the war.

I stole quietly away and left them.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VISIT TO KUT AND ARRIVAL AT BAGHDAD

AFTER Amara, sandbanks! (where we grounded in the mud for two solid hours!). And, after the sandbanks—*Kut.*

Here we bade farewell to the Tigris, but not for long. Mesopotamia is "the land of the four rivers," and wherever you wander, one of them is never far away. In the city of the Caliphs we should meet our old friend the Tigris once again.

At Kut, with its undying memories, we did not linger longer than to wish it well, and to mark, with a tightening of the heart, the obelisk erected out of our captured guns by the Turks to commemorate their victory. It stands as a menace and sentinel, near the graves of our fallen men. Personally, I would have sunk it fifty fathoms deep in the Tigris, for it hurt to see it. But, what will you? We are a magnanimous nation. So there it still stands, lest we forget!

That historic part of Kut where the tragedy of the long siege was enacted we did not see. Roughly, it lies about three miles from the cantonment landing-place.

After a cheery little dinner at the Staff Mess, we left for Baghdad—a night's journey from Kut, Thus, alas, we missed the wonderful arch of Ctesiphon, which, during the daylight, can be seen from the windows of the railway carriage.

I slept, dreamlessly, until the train reached our destination at the streak of dawn! (Why, in the East, does one always arrive at those ungodly hours?)

At the station I had a confused impression of a gesticulating crowd of Arabs, besieging the carriage windows and seizing everything they could lay their hands upon. With a wail of agony, I saw my one and only little box disappearing into a screaming mob; but an avenging angel, in the shape of Mustapha (F.'s Turkish servant), bore down on them, and with a kick here and a cuff there, scattered them as a flock of frightened sheep. Finally, after much talking and baksheesh, Little Box, Band Box, Bundle and I, accompanied by F. and Mustapha, were whirled off in a cloud of dust to the hotel.

The Hotel Maud (wittily dubbed "The Robbers' Castle" by impecunious subalterns who *ought* to know!) was the only hotel in Baghdad at that time. It was kept by a Chaldean, and was formerly, I believe, the German Consulate during the late Turkish regime. Traces of past grandeur in the way of faded damask curtains and upholstered velvet chairs still survived.

A great barrack of an apartment on the upper story was allotted to us, having a deep wide veranda overlooking the river; and just in front of the window was a tall oleander tree in full bloom. On the ground-floor, only divided from the water's edge by a low stone wall, was the hotel garden, in which little tables were dotted about, making an open-air restaurant. From there, one could see the long bridge of boats spanning the river (Baghdad lying on both sides of the Tigris).

In the cool of the evening everyone dined outside, our Chaldean proprietor, being a man of enterprise, provided an orchestra consisting of a piano and a fiddle,

"just to make my guests feel festive" (he vivaciously confided to me). This it certainly did, not to say "restive" at times.

We were waited on by Chaldeans in long flowing robes of green or yellow, belted at the waist with a coloured sash or girdle. On their feet they wore red Turkish slippers. The usual Mohammedan fez they dispensed with, for, being Christians, their heads remained uncovered.

During the heat of the day, meals were served in an underground room called "Sirdab," for the sake of coolness.

All the houses have these furnished cellars, sometimes sunk below the level of the river. Here people practically live during the overpowering heat of the summer months in Iraq.

Arab houses are usually built of vivid yellow brick picked out with white cement—to my eyes, much more attractive and uncommon than the ordinary red brick. On entering, one finds a central courtyard, in which is usually a fountain, or even a small garden. There is always an outside staircase leading to the upper apartments. These look on to a spacious veranda which generally surrounds the entire courtyard. Very often there are no windows facing the street at all, partly, no doubt, for fear of robbers, and partly, I imagine, to prevent too inquisitive (harem) "Eves" from seeing the wicked world of "Adams" outside!

And so, at long last, I was in Baghdad, "The Garden of David," as it is sometimes called. Life had been moving so fast for me that I began to feel that I wanted to sit down and sort my impressions. Certainly, I had arrived! But how? In a modern railway carriage!! It seemed all wrong. Far more fitting to have reclined, cross-legged, on a magic carpet, floating gently over



THE MAUDE BRIDGE (OPEN), BAGHDAD.

[*To face p.* 94.

golden minarets and palaces, and descending from the clouds into the city of the Caliphs.

I confess that I had entered the ancient capital expectant—full of romantic visions, coloured, no doubt, from the Arabian Nights—but Baghdad, or Dor-i-Salan (meaning "The Abode of Peace"), is, alas, now far from a peaceful spot. To-day it is shorn of much of its former glory. The old walls and golden-tipped minarets are all that is left of the Garden of David. The romance of the Arabian Nights lies buried in the shroud and mists of bygone days.

In the crowded streets there is dust and heat and bustle, though during the British occupation much had been done to regulate the traffic of the thoroughfares.

From the river the view is beautiful, but I think the picturesque colouring of most Eastern towns is lacking in Baghdad, the brightly tinted *abbahs* of the Jewish and Chaldean girls alone giving warmth and beauty to the khaki-coloured houses interlaced with date trees. At first sight there is certainly a feeling of disenchantment; and yet, if one has eyes to see, there are moments when the veil of centuries lifts, and the ancient capital glows once more with some of the glamour of her former beauty.

When the city lies hushed, and the sounds from the bazaars grow fainter, when the shadows about her blue-domed mosques draw closer and closer, casting illusive fantastic hues on crumbling walls and buildings, painting minaret and palm tree inky black against a crimson curtain—then some of the magic of the past comes back, and calls up memories of dead forgotten scenes.

Time seems to flash backwards through the intervening years, and to pause. . . .

While over the Tigris the moon rises and looks down as of yore upon the gorgeous Palace of HAROUN

AL-RASCHID, one of the last and greatest of the Caliphs. . . .

There are sounds of revelry in the Palace gardens. In the still night air float soft notes of music.

One can almost hear the clashing of cymbals, the loud laughter of those that feast, the flutes, and the love songs. And faintly and far away from the great city come the voices of the crowd, mingling with the beating of drums, and the shrill cry of the water-sellers tinkling their cups.

Thus the drama of the East went on in that golden age when Haroun al-Raschid reigned as Caliph, and Baghdad was the centre of luxury and learning. All its wonderful life, its romance, its riches, and its power; those nights of joy and days of laughter and music; could they pass away? It seemed impossible! And yet, naught now remains save "the dust of ages" beneath our feet.

But I must not let my imagination run riot, for I suppose if the world continue to wag another thousand years, history will repeat itself more frequently than one imagines.

As I glance from my window, the self-same sun is setting over the self-same river, and across the Tigris; from the distant bazaars the self-same water carriers are tinkling their cups, while over the high wall of a Pasha's palace near by I hear a flute, and laughter, and love songs!

CHAPTER XIX

PILGRIMS FROM PERSIA CARRYING THEIR DEAD TO KERBELA

THERE is, practically, but one principal thoroughfare in Baghdad. It is called "New Street," and runs the entire length of the town. They say it was ruthlessly hacked through the heart of the city by Khalel-Pasha, instigated, no doubt, by the Germans, and quite irrespective of the feelings and property of the inhabitants. Anyway, there it is to-day; and the Hotel Maud, being in the centre, considers itself "The Hub of the Universe."

Leaving the hotel gardens and turning to the left, one eventually comes to the attractive bazaars of Baghdad, where I spent many a hot, but happy, morning exploring their dim mysterious depths, and losing myself in a maze of narrow passages. Continuing down New Street and bearing slightly to the left is a picturesque blue-domed mosque with its halo of pigeons continually encircling above it. Close by is a big archway, and at its entrance stand two British sentries. Here, formerly, was the old Turkish Arsenal, now used as an Ordnance stores. At lightning speed (somehow every Arab driver wants to race), the car whirls us through the dusty street; past open-air cafés where lazy Arabs sit cross-legged on high wooden benches, smoking their long water pipes (called "nargilehs"), or solemnly drinking coffee;

past droves of sheep and little vine-covered booths heaped up with oranges and dates; past Khurds with black-domed hats, and stately blue-robed Persians. Quite indiscriminately, a crowd of camels, mules, veiled women and khaki-clad soldiers jostle and push each other along the thoroughfare. This is the common life of New Street and its daily round.

At the outskirts of the town stands the old North Gate, a remnant of the ancient city. Passing through its huge nail-studded doors (now always open), the great stretch of desert commences. Over that trackless waste, about thirty miles to the east, lay Baqubah!

"And there," said F., pointing joyfully into the sandy horizon, "is where our tents are pitched!"

Well, if my heart *did* miss a beat with apprehension and chose that particular moment to give a little apprehensive flutter, no one was a bit the wiser—and "it don't make no difference anyway," as one of my Tommy friends used to remark.

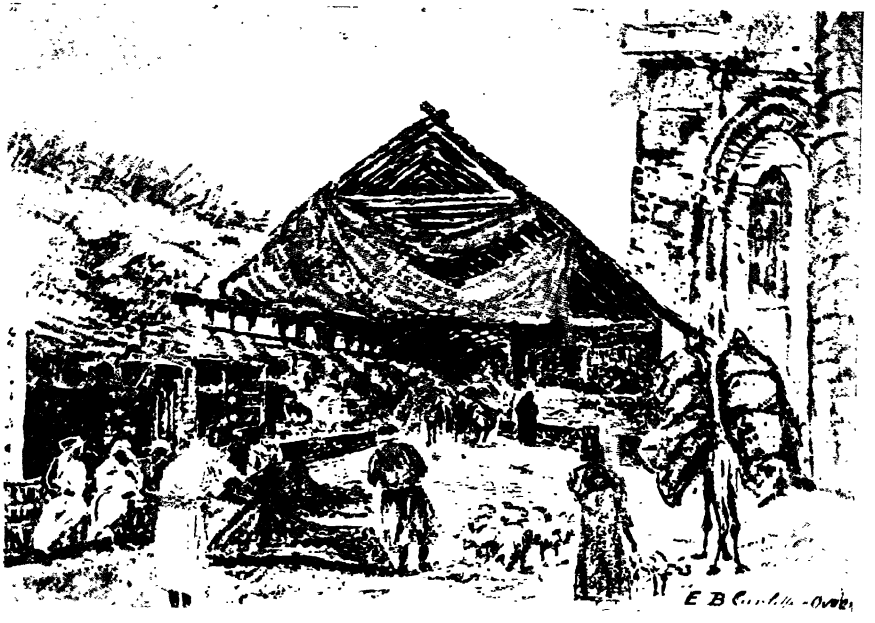
While we were gazing through the North Gate, in the far distance we noticed a cloud of dust, and on the warm still air there came floating towards us the jingling of bells and of incoming caravans; then a string of camels and mules silhouetted themselves darkly against the skyline.

F. turned to me and said: "Listen! Those are the caravans of the Persian Pilgrims! Do you want to stop and see them?"

"Of course I want to stop," I replied. "I would sit like a hen for hours rather than miss them."

So we pulled up at the side of the road and waited.

From Persia, it seems, a pilgrimage is made annually by faithful Shias to the sacred city of Kerbela, where Hussain (the Prophet's grandson) is buried. Sometimes the weary pilgrims take six months, and even longer,



BAZAAR SCENE, BAGHDAD.

to accomplish the journey, their highest ambition being to visit this sacred spot once before they die. Often the sick are carried on camels in the hope of drawing their last breath in that sanctuary, thus ensuring their eternal salvation. Should they by chance succumb before reaching their destination, well, it is "Kismet and Allah be praised," their bones at least may rest under the shadow of the holy mosque, and so the poor corpse is somehow conveyed thither by sorrowing relations.

Presently we heard the hum of voices gradually approaching, with the neighing and braying of animals, accompanied by a strange medley of sounds, and slowly the long straggling procession filed past. First came a group of Persians strangely attired in long coats made of blue cotton, rather like a European frock coat, only pleated round the waist. On their heads they wore tall astrakhan caps. Behind the Persians were camels with what looked like enormous cradle-baskets hung on either side. Their contents were hidden from view by dirty chintz curtains. F. told me that these contents were probably the women-folk of one of the frock-coated gentlemen! As the camels passed us with a long rolling gait (ships of the desert, indeed), I suddenly saw three henna-tipped fingers draw aside a portion of the curtain, and two inquisitive black eyes looked straight into mine! Then there came more pilgrims on foot, some of them wild-looking men with long straggling black locks and half-naked bodies, save for a few rags held together by a rope round their loins. In their hands they held long staffs. Doubtless they were dervishes begging their way to the holy shrine. Behind these came mules with tinkling bells hung round their necks, laden with carpets, cooking utensils and bedding! so overloaded, in fact, that sometimes there was nothing visible but two long ears and

four industrious little hoofs plodding along. Poor patient beasts! Their whitening skeletons are the only milestones along that desert track. The carpets are often sold on the way down from Persia, or exchanged for food. After the mules, a gruesome sight met our eyes, for fastened on the backs of miserable little country ponies were wicker coffins containing the corpses of the faithful, sometimes, I believe, brought hundreds of miles to be entombed at Kerbela. I can only most fervently trust that the bones were well bleached by the sun *en route,* for the sake of their families and friends.

It was a strange procession, but not wanting in interest. Many of them had weary, dull expressions on their faces, and yet there was something fine, I thought, in the indomitable spirit which carried them along and made them endure untold hardships and privations for the sake of their faith.

The next morning we visited the south side of the town. It is what might be called "the West End" of Baghdad. Here the seats of the mighty are! First in order, there is G.H.Q., which was formerly the old British Residency. Then comes the General's house, with its smart little Ghurka sentry. At that time Major-General Sir George MacMunn was the General Officer Commanding in Chief. F. and he had been cadets together at Woolwich, and while Sir George remained in Mesopotamia we always found in him a kind sympathetic friend. A few doors further on lived the Civil Commissioner, then Sir Arnold Wilson, a man of dynamic force and character. In my opinion, it was a sad day for Iraq when he and General MacMunn left. The last house of all in this aristocratic quarter was that of Colonel Howell, a Political Officer in charge of the Revenue and Finance Department. Here our journey ended, for *here* we were invited to lunch.

Colonel Howell and his wife practically kept open house, and I have pleasant memories of their never-failing hospitality whenever we came in from Baqubah.

During the course of conversation at lunch I learned a few interesting facts. First, that I would most certainly not survive desert life under canvas during the hot months, the thermometer registering at times 130 degrees in the shade—and, well—" it was no place for a woman ! "—I glanced up. Thank goodness F. was deep in conversation, and did not hear.

" You know," someone remarked at my elbow, " in Mesopotamia three things always happen to you ! "

" Indeed ! " I replied, at once interested, " and what are they ? "

" Well—first you lose your hair ! "

I looked startled.

" Secondly, you lose your teeth ! "

My jaw dropped.

" And, thirdly, you lose your reputation ! ! "

No ! That was too much. Common sense told me it was impossible. Reputation could never be lost after teeth and hair were *non est !*

" Anyway," I rejoined, laughing, " I see one does not lose a sense of humour, and that is a great asset. Besides," I added, " the first two are easily replaced nowadays ! "

" And what about the third ? " queried my cheerful companion.

" Well, that," I retorted, as we rose from the table, " I'll answer when I buy my first wig ! "

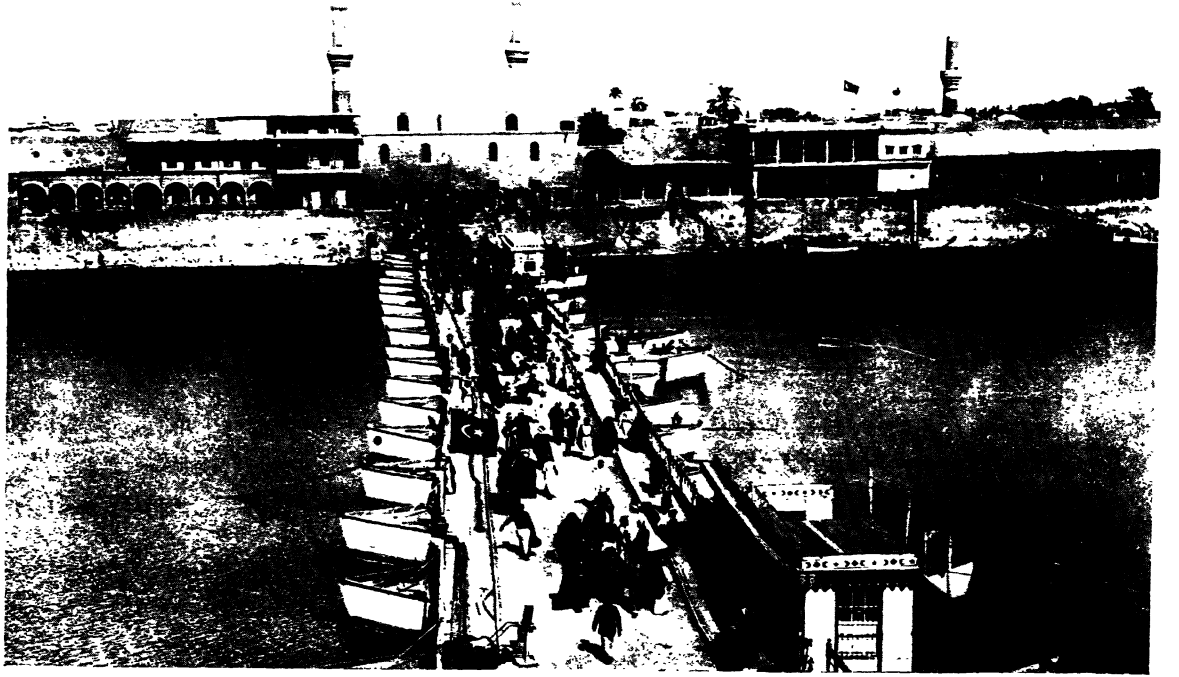
Oh ! Bird of ill-omen ! Your prophecy came back with renewed poignancy months later. Hair certainly became distinctly illusive. Mercifully, I just escaped a wig, having started with a fairly good crop ! But others were not so fortunate, and before the end of the summer,

" the hairs of their head were all numbered ! " Teeth, like the wicked, never ceased from troubling ; and, as for Reputation !—well, I still smile in my sleep with an easy conscience, and that's something anyway !

Many and varied are the troubles of the Mesopotamian. In the first place, it is impossible to get most of the ordinary necessities of life. Wood, for instance, is as precious as rubies, and is mostly imported from India and Burma, the Arab objecting as a rule to having any but date trees planted, his reason being, " Trees bring birds, and birds eat crops ! " Quite simple logic ! Consequently, furniture—even of the most primitive description—was dear and difficult to obtain.

F. and I battled with the problem the whole of one morning until struck by a brain-wave simultaneously. Why not go to the Wharf ? buy our logs of wood, and employ the refugees to make our furniture !—thus killing two birds with one stone ? No sooner said than done.

Down the river we cruised next day on a launch lent to us by the Assistant Director of Labour, who was a tower of strength, and most resourceful in getting work done for me. Oh ! how deliciously cool it was skimming over the water and gliding past the date-fringed banks of the Tigris with its bougainvillæa-covered houses, whose gardens creep to the water's edge. I was thrilled at everything ! The boats of quaint build continually passing up and down, with their delicious red and orange sails, or lying at anchor heaped up with fruit ready to unload. Above all, the wonderful Goofas ! These are perfectly circular boats made of basket-work and covered with bitumen in order, I suppose, to make them water-tight. They are propelled by a man with a long pole, and roll about like huge turtles ! In and out and round about they circle, squeezing themselves under larger craft in the most amazing manner. These Goofas are the



"BRIDGE OF BOATS" AT BAGHDAD.

[*To face p.* 102.

oldest boats ever employed in the memory of man, and date from the dawn of Time.

Who knows but Mr. Noah had his own private Goofa attached to the Ark, in which he took his family for an airing after the Deluge!

They are big enough to carry a dozen men, and I saw one laden with horses and sheep! The Arabs use them also as ferry boats. One migrating gentleman, surrounded by a crowd of relations, was seated on the top of his entire household belongings. It looked a most perilous adventure, especially when the wash from our launch made the solemn family party rotate like a tee-totum! I hope they were insured!

Besides the primitive Goofas, there are also strange craft called "Kelleks." These are inflated goat-skins covered with a framework of wood (like a raft), on the top of which there is sometimes a small rude shelter for the use of a passenger. It looks exactly like a dog kennel. Occasionally a head pops out as they pass by, and one almost expects to hear a friendly bark!

F. told me that, in 1840 he believed, Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered walls of brickwork below the normal river level, and on these bricks, to everyone's astonishment, the name of Nebuchadnezzar was inscribed, thus showing, I think, that in those far-away days they had *Sirdabs* or underground rooms the same as at the present day. I drew a breath of wondering delight. It was too marvellous—all these unbelievable Bible names cropping up casually in ordinary everyday life! Romance and discomfort seemed to rub shoulders together in this marvellous land!

CHAPTER XX

ACROSS THE DESERT TO BAQUBAH AND THE BAZAARS OF BAGHDAD

THE next morning I awoke with a bad attack of "Bazaaritis," in other words, the lure of the bazaar was in my blood; it is a malady to which most Europeans succumb in the East, and when a severe attack commences, it is advisable to leave the patient austerely alone, for the disease is infectious. Personally I took it badly. I had not as yet seen the noted bazaars of Baghdad, supposed to rival even those of Constantinople. Unfortunately, with F., romance does not spell bazaars! To him the word simply meant Dirt (with a capital D.), Heat and Odours! So I knew that in that quarter, for me, there was nothing doing!

"Good morning!" called a cheery voice as I was leaving the breakfast room later, and there, in the hotel garden, stood the General's young A.D.C.

"The Chief has sent his car in case you like to go bazaar-wards," he said, saluting.

"How ripping!" I exclaimed, joyfully. "I'll be ready in two twos!"

Down New Street we sped in the General's big "Vauxhall," past crumbling mud walls and over bumping cobbles, till we pulled up in the midst of a feast of colour and of surging humanity. Facing us was a high vaulted arch, supported by wooden poles, through which the

crowd passed in and out incessantly, and hanging from the roof in picturesque festoons, were fluttering bits of torn tents and coloured cottons, while just over the entrance we remarked numbers of kerosine oil tins! These were beaten flat and nailed one upon another, rather resembling a coat of mail! . . . From long exposure they had turned a rusty orange, only adding a quaint touch to the already motley scene. Men and women, camels, donkeys and vehicles passed and re-passed, jostling each other.

This was my first glimpse of the famous Baghdad Bazaar!

Leaving the car at the entrance, we dived through the archway and joining the crowd were soon borne into its mysterious depths. The subdued light almost blinded us after the strong sunlight outside. At first I could hardly distinguish anything, but soon my eyes got accustomed to the delicious rainbow hues which filtered down from windows high up near the roof, throwing shafts of hazy sunlight on to open-fronted booths on either side. On one of these, piled up in a riot of colour and wild confusion, were fruits and sweets. Heaped-up baskets of golden and juicy oranges, purple grapes, pink water-melons and dates, together with Turkish delight and sticky-looking coloured sweets.

In the centre of all these delicacies there sat, cross-legged, a red-fezzed Arab who, with utter detachment, smoked his hubble-bubble, pulling at the long stem with cow-like content. Everywhere that subtle aroma which pervades a bazaar filled our nostrils, strange pungent scents enveloping and elusive.

At first the din and noise seemed overwhelming!

Cries of merchants hawking their wares mingled with the tinkling cups of water sellers, or the deeper jangling notes of camel bells, whose drivers shouted incessantly:

"Ballak!" "Ballak!" ("Clear the way") a warning to foot passengers.

Suddenly I received a violent blow in my back from an overloaded donkey whose burden of oranges was scattered right and left. Seizing me by the arm the A.D.C. hurried me down a little dark alley in order to avoid the crowd who immediately closed upon us.

We escaped! But for some time the screams of the donkey boy belabouring his wretched animal and the scent of oranges drifted after us.

Now we threaded our way through a network of passages where the light of the sun never penetrated, stumbling indiscriminately over stray dogs and wee babies whose eyes were usually swarming with flies. These terrible pests the poor children are seldom allowed to brush away, for fear of the "Evil eye."

Eventually we found ourselves in the carpet bazaar. Here again a riot of colour met us, carpets of every shade and design were hanging from the ceiling or piled upon the booths.

Many indeed were spread on the ground for pedestrians to pass over! By the time endless dirty feet have tramped over them, they gain that mellow part-worn appearance which enables the dealer to palm them off as antique specimens to uninitiated tourists. In one corner I noticed an Arab and a Jew haggling over the price of a rug, glaring at one another like two Kilkenny cats while they tugged violently at either end of the carpet, pulling it backwards and forwards, endeavouring to come to terms!

"Oh! look!" I cried to my companion (who was fast falling under the spell of carpets). "Do look! A little further on I see a gorgeous *abbah*. Only Baghdad could make such silk!"

Immediately in front of us, through a low archway

was the silk market. Darting to one of the stalls I called back excitedly: "Come and help me to choose an *abbah*." Then the grim and fierce joy of bargaining took possession of us.

In the East there is never a fixed price for anything! The very word bazaar means "bargain."

In three languages we endeavoured to bargain. We argued in Arabic, we cajoled in Turkish, until finally in plain English we threatened to walk away. It was of no avail. A pastmaster in passive resistance, our fat merchant deliberately cracked his knuckles one by one and just smiled. Wild asses would not make him come down a piastre. His utter indifference as to whether we bought or not only served to stimulate our keenness. Meanwhile countless other merchants with *abbahs* of every shade endeavoured to entice us to their stalls.

By this time we had collected half the bazaar, and each passer-by offered some advice or stopped, an interested spectator of what we were doing. Even children chimed in, all talking at the top of their voices, almost deafening, and nearly suffocating me. No bargain, it seems, is concluded without an apparent squabble. Public opinion was fast going against our merchant, who now became pathetic.

"I very poor man," he wailed; "is not the price cheap? Dirt cheap? . . ."

"May Allah grow a beard upon thy nose! but thou liest," said a voice behind me, and a perspiring portly lady in a purple *abbah*, who had been breathing heavily for some minutes on my neck, now pushed to the front, fingering, with the hand of a connoisseur, the particular one I wanted, snapped her fingers in the face of our fat merchant, calling on the entire crowd to notice the exorbitant sum he was asking the Khanoum!

This was too much for the old man's pride.

Shrugging his shoulders he murmured "*Kallas!*" (Finished) and so gave way. Thus we became the proud possessors of two beautiful *abbahs*, one for the A.D.C.'s best girl I presume, and one for myself.

Flushed with success, and with the light of victory still in our eyes, we continued our exciting career, darting from one enticing booth to another, until, to our dismay, we found our pockets had no longer either gold or silver linings—we were broke!

I wonder why there is always such a fascination about a bazaar with its dimly-lit network of alleys? For, in spite of dirt, dilapidation and odours, every corner makes a picture dear to the soul of the artist.

Suddenly, across a shaft of sunlight, out of nowhere, a vivid flash of green crosses our vision, and a donkey laden with grass passes, melting again into the shadows. Then a woman, a large brass pot poised gracefully on her head, glides into the picture, the dust from the sheep she is driving making a golden mist about her. Bedouins with long robes and crowns of camel hair coiled round their *keffeias* (head scarves) pass with stately measured tread, or a mincing string of camels grunt as they file past. It is such a scene of vivid life, motion and interest, that I have the desire to linger and linger; but my kind little cicerone, I feel, must be thinking of the excellent lunch which I am sure is awaiting him. So, with a sigh of regret, I allow myself to be led back to the car.

"Good-bye," I say, as we part. "Thank you for giving me a glimpse into the Arabian Nights, and please tell the General that I have had a golden morning."

Early the following week F. left for Baqubah, a few days in advance of me, in order to take over command of the camp, and, incidentally, to prepare for my arrival.

Whether "Satan finds some mischief for idle hands, etc.," or whether I had jaunted bazaar-wards too well and not too wisely I don't know; the fact remained my peep into the Arabian Nights was the last lucid memory I had of normal life for three tragic days. I collapsed with fever. Wearily I tossed on a couch which was anything but "downy," and too short! There is an Arab proverb which aptly remarks: "Stretch out your feet according to your quilt." Those words rankled! I had only two alternatives: to fold myself up like a penknife, or painfully unfold and describe the letter S! With the best intentions, I could *not* stretch out my legs, *quilt* or *no quilt*. Backwards and forwards I tossed until I began to think that I was working myself up for brain fever. I had become almost tearful! This would never do—pull myself together I *must*. So, shouting for the bearer, I demanded food. It came! *I* saw! And *it* conquered! Waving it aside, I turned my face despairingly to the wall, and then, in a painfully cramped position, I ran through "the gamut of life's emotions!" Meanwhile a battalion of sandflies enjoyed—what I was denied—a healthy meal off me!

"These little things are sent to try us," I groaned, making a frantic effort to fall on a mosquito singing a gentle lullaby round my head.

Presently there came a knock at the door, and a letter was handed to me. I seized it with joy; anything to break the monotony of the long, long day.

And here I must for a moment pause, to add that what follows is written in a humbled and a chastened spirit!

The note was a few kind words from one of the G.H.Q. staff, who, knowing that I was alone, asked if he could be of any service to me. A postscript at the end casually mentioned that he had just been made A.M.S., and that in case I wished to call him up his telephone

number now was XXX. Kindness always touches me, and the thoughtful little note comforted me not a little. For some time I lay wondering idly what the letters A.M.S. could possibly mean? *Everything* was initials in Mesopotamia. My brain had not yet solved the mystery of it all. At last a bright thought struck me—A.M.S.—Army Medical Service, of course!

The hotel food was impossible. I wondered if my kind A.M.S. friend could get me a few medical comforts. Quite cheered, I scribbled a little note.

"Dear Major," I began, "For the moment, Valentine's Beef Essence, or calves' foot jelly, are my highest ambitions. Would it be possible, without giving too much trouble, to procure either for me?"

Two hours elapsed, and then a large tin of Horlick's Malted Milk arrived with a note attached. Major —— was full of contrition at not being able to procure what I wanted. Each hospital had been visited in turn (kind man!) but alas, even though he had just been promoted to the giddy height of *Assistant Military Secretary*, he feared it would still be necessary to apply to the *Army Medical Service* in order to get calves' foot jelly or Valentine's Beef Essence!

I fell back, too exhausted to cope further with the alphabet. That night I believe I was delirious, babbling initials! "A.B.C."—"A.S.C."—What was it? It beat into my brain, and I began again: "A.M.S."—"A.S.S.!"—Oh! what a topsy-turvy world it was! And I was the biggest "A.S.S.!" in Mespots.

Four days after this tragic nightmare, a comfortable "Vauxhall" car rolled up to the hotel with a note from F., in which he joyfully announced: "Our tents are pitched, and all is in readiness for you to come to Baqubah," adding, "I am sending Major Smith, one of my staff, in the car to bring you out."

I was feeling absurdly weak and lonely. The three days' fever had sapped some of the buoyancy of my spirit and I was glad to think that Major Smith (whom I already knew), instead of a total stranger, had come to fetch me. It did not take long to stow away my luggage, and with the temperature at that of "spontaneous combustion" we started off cheerfully. Thankfully I stretched my legs to their full length in the roomy car, and settled down to enjoy the drive.

Out of the North Gate we sped, and then, bearing to the right, were immediately in the desert. As far as the eye could see, the great trackless waste stretched away until it melted into the far horizon. To find oneself in the desert for the first time is, I think, an experience not soon forgotten. It seems to draw one irresistibly by its silence—its grand simplicity.

In such vast spaces, under an open sky, far from the babel of tongues and hurrying crowds, all the little petty things of life seem to fall away and leave one "a naked soul alone with one's Creator." My companion sat silently beside me; he was very "understanding"; it was all so new to me; I did not want to speak—at least not then!

On and on we sped. Nothing broke the glaring monotony save sand and scrub, or the bleached bones of animals. Occasionally the scene was varied by an Arab khan where we watered the engine, then forward once more, across sandy caravan tracks, where the only milestones were the half-eaten carcases of patient mule or camel. Now and again a shadow would pass overhead, and a large vulture would flop down, blinking as we passed, beside the remains of some animal.

After a time the track got worse, and things became distinctly lively.

Have you ever motored across a ploughed field?

If so, then you have a dim understanding of what I suffered for the next hour. I was convinced I would carry to my grave the indelible marks of barked shins and mutilated limbs. Our course was wayward and erratic in the extreme, for we had to be constantly changing our minds in the matter of direction.

We rocked and we rolled, sometimes wallowing in unforeseen ruts, or lurching like a drunken man endeavouring to keep the track.

"Oh!" I jerked out, "N-no-b-body can suf-fer from l-liver in M-Mes-opot-amia!"

"No," stuttered Major Smith, "we f-find it s-stim-u-lating as a rule; it k-keeps our l-livers brisk and live-ly."

Silence, only broken by a duet of chattering teeth. Suddenly the car, without warning, gave an appalling convulsion (negotiating a rut), and leapt violently into the air, while I—taken unawares—almost, but not quite, leapt into the road! Having done its worst, just to show what it could do, the car settled down into a less restive mood.

"It will be better now," remarked my companion. "See, in the far distance are the tents of Baqubah."

Straining my eyes across stretches of yellow sand, there came to my vision a gleam of white tents clustering close together, or "scattered far and wide like flocks of pigeons." Hundreds and hundreds of them—"shadowy tents upon an endless plain"—as far as the eye could see they stretched, until their dim outline melted into the blue of the horizon. Gradually we approached, and I saw that everything lay bare to the cruel sun. No green, no shadow anywhere, only those cowering tents huddled together as if seeking protection from the pitiless glare.

Was this going to be my home? My heart sank, and I, who *did* so love flowers, and trees and the songs of birds!



[From an original sketch by the Author.

THE DESERT TRACK FROM BAQUBAH CAMP INTO BAGHDAD.

DESERT SCENE.

Where the jaded horse unwilling plies the harassing whip,
Where weary footsteps lag and falter on a dry and scorched land,
Where the mirage lures you onward—on thro' sand and blinding glare,
And where vultures big and swollen, gorged with carrion, blink and stare.

There is mental desolation—shelterless 'neath open sky,
Ruthless Nature still is relentless—every weakling has to die!
Miss your track—even heaven help you, to each ghastly milestone scores
Bleaching bones of man and camel—This is what the Desert means!

B. C.-O.

Could I bear it? I put the thought quickly from me, and leant back in the car. Somehow I felt extraordinarily tired, and, shutting my eyes, there floated through my brain words I had read somewhere long ago:

> "Our frame of mind, after all, is much more important than circumstances!"

The next moment the car drew up. I saw a tall flagstaff from which the British flag was floating bravely over a crowd of wild-looking refugees. There were several officers standing around it, and then—F. came towards me with such a happy smile of welcome that all my gloomy fears vanished!

For the first moment I felt a little nervous amongst so many strangers; but everyone was friendly and soon put me at my ease. Then F. whispered, in an aside to me, that each of our future retainers wished to be presented solemnly by name. One Assyrian after another came up.

First there was "Simon" the cook, who spoke no English—only *patois* French, a shaggy, unkempt-looking man with a gentle expression and kind, steady eyes. He proved a true friend and faithful retainer, though always an indifferent cook! Then came "Remunta" (meaning Pomegranate), my little Assyrian maid. Curtsying demurely, she kissed my hand. Her name was a continual joy to me, and her knowledge of English made many a dull day mirthful. The Assyrians have a pretty conceit of calling their women-folk by the names of jewels and fruit. Next there came "Shliman," F.'s personal factotum; and then my priceless gardener "Artin," an Armenian—the fact that there was not a blade of grass or ghost of a flower anywhere was a detail! To make roses bloom in desert places was a rather impossible Bible task; but I did it! with Artin's assistance, who

firmly believed that by placing egg-shells on sticks among the flower beds my roses were saved from death and mice driven away! There were other retainers, too, but their names defeated me entirely.

Afterwards we adjourned to the hospital for tea, the nursing sisters having offered to put me up in one of their tents for the night.

Hospitals were a very important feature of the Baqubah Camp at that time. There were two complete units, each with a large staff of medical officers and nursing sisters, under whose tuition Assyrian and Armenian girls were trained as V.A.D.'s.

All through the hot months of the previous year, from August to the following October, refugees had streamed into the camp in a pitiable condition, suffering from every known disease under the sun. The untold privations they suffered I will relate in their own words further on. Enough for the moment to say that men, women and children had been ruthlessly massacred by Turks, Khurds and Persians during the horrors of their flight down from the North, and this for the sole reason that they were Christians.

The Armenians had sided with the Russians, who eventually left them in the lurch. When the upheaval in Russia came, the Russians withdrew their army from Asia Minor and those Turkish eastern provinces round Van and the Caucasus, which they had formerly occupied. Thus the Armenians were left to the mercy of the Moslems. Forced to leave their homes, they fled into Northern Persia and joined up with the Assyrians, who were then in the same plight. The latter had placed their faith on Allied succour, which, unfortunately, was unable to reach them in time. Threatened by overwhelming numbers, and without ammunition, they fled south to seek British shelter. Numbers were taken prisoners, or

died from exhaustion and dysentery by the roadside. The death-rate in the wards, I was told, numbered at first sixty a day!

Later, I visited some of the hospital tents. It gave me rather an "achy" feeling, and I simply had to swallow hard when I saw tiny skeleton children with old, old wizened faces. In their poor little claw-like hands they held toys which the kind sisters had given them. But, oh! in their eyes there was no light of joy; they had never learnt to play—all their short span of life had meant simply suffering, nothing else. Women, too, old and young alike, were lying weary and nerveless, on their beds. As I passed they gazed at me with wistful glances. Somehow their eyes hurt me, like those of a tame gazelle I had once seen shot by accident.

That night I slept in the desert for the first time! It was a new experience! As I raised the flap of my tent, I caught a glimpse of my little camp bed placed outside in the open on a carpet of golden sand. It looked delicious—but a trifle public, I thought. Stealing out into the moonlight, I crept into my bed with a sigh of utter exhaustion, and lay there looking up into my roof of stars! Gradually a sense of infinite peace stole over me, and to my drowsy consciousness an invisible hand seemed to be gently rocking me to sleep in the Cradle of the World!

And so the evening and the morning were my *first* Day!

CHAPTER XXI

WE PITCH OUR TENTS IN THE DESERT

I CAN think of only one drawback to the joy of sleeping in the open, and, to my mind, it is a very serious one. Usually in the morning it is a race between you and the sun as to who shall be up first!

Hardly had I closed my eyes (at least so it seemed to me), than there came peeping up over the rim of the world the round red face of Good King Sol! I did not want the "sunshine of his smile"—not then. He is such a horribly strenuous person, too, in the East—and so previous!

After breakfast F. came in the car to conduct me to my desert home. It was quite primitive, just three little tents in all, two side by side—the third appeared to have wandered off "all by its lonesome" six yards to the left. There it stood, a poor little semi-detached thing, and for no earthly reason so far as I could see!

F. murmured, I think, "Dining-room tent!"

"Oh!" I murmured in return, "jump six yards for one's dinner? That looks to me rather like an intensive poultry concern!" And then, somehow, I was sorry, for F. seemed so proud of it all. Ah, well, only a woman, I think, could have foreseen the discomfort those six yards entailed for me. To a "mere man" I suppose it was but a trifle. Three times a day I fought my way through a buffeting wind, pitiless sun and blinding sand,

and never have I worked harder for my daily bread! Only the extreme pangs of hunger could have spurred me on to negotiate that channel passage. It was a fiery ordeal—and personally, purely personally, I for one have had a kindly fellow-feeling for "Shadrach," "Meshach" and "Abed-nego" ever since! The world, I presume, would never have got any for'arder if man had not been experimental; and those three little tents in the sand kept me busier than any old bee in its hive for seven solid months. Job learnt patience in the East—and so did I!

Assyrian workmen like to have time to pause over life's pleasures, and it was difficult to keep them up to the mark without British supervision, of which there was not too much. At first an officer and several B.O.R.'s were over each section of refugees, but F. had reduced this to a minimum, making the Assyrians and Armenians take the responsibility on their own shoulders. This, of course, considerably reduced expenditure, and at the same time gave the refugees paid labour.

One day "Pomegranate" told me in confidence that my extreme business filled the workmen with amazement.

"If all women worked like the Khanoum," they said, "no wonder England was a great nation!"

To make a long story short, I determined to build! "To build me a place of habitation to dwell in." So down went the tents, and up went a house! A house built on sand! And that reminds me, the Bible is quite right, for "when the winds blew and the rain rained" part of it *did* fall! And I began to build in the fourth week of the fourth month; and the walls thereof were of plastered *muttie**; and the roof and posts of wooden beams; but the window-panes thereof stumped us entirely—how to procure them was a problem!

* Mud.

However, in Iraq one must be an inventor or perish! Stained-glass windows were the fashion in the camp. All the best B.O.R.'s had them in their messes. These consisted of old beer and soda-water bottles! So I begged, borrowed and stole from officers and men alike ("Pussy-foot" Johnson would have struck me off his visiting list!). Personally, I must admit, I had a *penchant* for Japanese beer; the bottles were such a lovely golden-brown, and blended with the rainbow tints of the soda-water bottles. But bottles of any sort were a "boon and a blessing to men" in those days. Once in possession of these priceless treasures, the rest was child's play. The neck was cut off, and the bodies cemented together in alternate patterns side by side, then adjusted into the window frames—and lo! the trick was done! Perhaps I am puffed up with pride, but when the sun shone through those stained-glass windows I felt that the only thing necessary to complete the picture was a halo round my head!

After this *succès fou* I tackled the garden! Here one had to look ahead, for in the winter the ground becomes a swamp, and a raised path was absolutely necessary from the front door to my wicket gate. Otherwise, not even gun boots could save you from the slough (of despond). This time the Orphanage came to my assistance. They supplied empty milk tins. Nestlé's tins made a dazzling footpath! When the sun shone, those tins scintillated and sparkled—they did indeed—like diamonds! Few could walk on that shining pathway without open admiration!

After this, together with "gardener Artin," I made "the desert to blossom like a rose." With the air of a 'nursery gardener" heavy upon him, Artin and I consulted over the formation of flower beds—square or crescent shape, which should they be? That was the

question! As a graceful compliment to a Mohammedan land, we decided on crescents. From flower beds we rose to rustic bridges, and erected one over a water-melon bed; but our *chef d'œuvre* was The Arbour! It rose majestically, fashioned "in and out" of camel-thorn and palm leaves, the whole artistically entwined with climbing sweet peas! Against the mud walls of the cottage were oleanders and hollyhocks. Beans and peas I had, and lettuces. Nothing came amiss! As a matter o' fact, if you can get enough water in the desert, even a stick will sprout! Finally, Artin himself put the finishing touch with his "egg shells all in a row." It was "some" garden!

I may add that I was also sole proprietor of a pigeon cote, and a Mesopotamian cat!

When it came to the interior apartments—well, that gave me food for thought. I chose the least unsteady seat I could find, and, like the poet Byron, "sat and mused awhile." I had strong leanings towards a "Chesterfield" for the drawing-room! This being beyond the dreams of avarice, I fell before the seductions of a *muttie* lounge stuffed with sacks of sand. This I covered with priceless draperies bought in the Baghdad bazaar. A few Persian rugs; one or two wooden chairs of antique make, a riot of colour in the way of cushions—and my Home was complete.

So on the seventh day of the seventh month I rested from my labours! I had made "The desert to blossom like a rose, and the waste places to be inhabited" (but that was looking ahead).

CHAPTER XXII

A VISIT TO THE ASSYRIAN PATRIARCH—I EXPERIENCE MY FIRST SANDSTORM

WISE men tell us "to live for the day." In the desert it is worth remembering. The temperature now began to be rather like living over a crater or a volcano; one never knew to what giddy heights the glass might reach, and spontaneous combustion set in and take control! However, a few weeks after my arrival, when I began to get a little "used-er" to "craters" and things, F. took me round the camp. It was really a wonderful place, and contained forty-five thousand souls in all, costing the British Government nineteen lacs of rupees a month—which F. (I say it to his credit) reduced to nine lacs eventually. There was an orphanage of one thousand children, whose parents and relatives had been massacred by the Moslems. This was run on strict military lines. The children were drilled daily, patriotism was instilled into them, and they were taught their national songs—more especially so with the Armenians—in order that they might prove good citizens and form the nucleus of a future Armenian nation should they ever get their independence.

As the children marched past for F.'s inspection, one little boy-lad struck me particularly, a blue-eyed little chap about nine years old! He strutted in front of the other children, got up in khaki breeches, regimental

coat, cap at the regulation angle, and swinging a miniature cane ! Oh ! but he was a " t'rific man of the world." I was interested, and was told his name was William. William's industrious fat legs then marched up, and no guardsman could have saluted better. His eyes were very round and his cheeks very red, and under his cap I'm convinced his hair rose to a perpendicular position with sheer fright at the fearful joy of exchanging words with the Commandant's Khanoum !

But William had suffered. His was a sad story, though only one among many in the orphanage.

It appeared that on that terrible march down through Persia, his parents had both been mutilated and then killed by the Turks before the eyes of their three children, two boys and a girl, of whom William was the youngest. His elder brother had been cut to pieces and his body thrown into a ditch, while William and his little sister were left behind to starve. The girl had finally succumbed, and little William was left piteously crying by the roadside, half dead from exposure and fright. Eventually, a troop of our " blessed " British cavalry passed and, hearing a child's sobbing, one of the troopers searched and found William—just a little bag of bones, in the last stage of exhaustion. Swinging him up on to the saddle in front of him (I should like to have known that man), he brought the child back, and nursed and fed him. From that day forward William's life was paradise. He was " the mascot " of the regiment. The men all spoiled him, dressed him up like a Tommy, taught him to box and fence, and made a little " sport " of him. His industrious fat legs followed them happily everywhere until, one tragic morning, when the regiment marched away, and William was left behind in the Orphanage at Baqubah.

The story worked to such an extent on my feelings

that I felt I must make William's life "merry and bright" at all costs. I would train him as a servant, and teach him to wait at table along with the other domestics. Of course, F. scoffed at the notion. He's generally right—though I don't admit it—and apparently I *am* a visionary, for it did not work. The old Adam came out in young William, and before many days I had "to return him to store," *i.e.*, to the Orphanage. Poor little chap! I still have a soft corner in my heart for him. His feelings always got the better of him. Usually at dinner time I would hear jaw-breaking yawns behind my chair, until finally the baby-footman had to be removed by one of his compatriots and put to bed!

From the Orphanage we went on to the animal camp—a distressing medley of beasts which the refugees had brought with them. After a time we started our own dairy farm and market gardens, had our own bazaar, and, in fact, were soon entirely self-supporting.

The women were taught various industries—amongst others, carpet weaving and lace work. They were also very clever knitters, and worked the most elaborate patterns into the socks of their men folk. These they wore with their national costume, which was the most original I had ever seen. Had one of their number (for preference a young Tiari mountaineer) walked on to a music-hall stage for a five minutes turn in London, he would have made his fortune! Their dress consisted of striped breeches, woven and dyed by themselves—from the wool of their own sheep. These they tucked into gaily patterned socks and white felt shoes. A vest and shirt and an armless coat of thick felt (usually black or white, and much embroidered). On their heads they wore a small round cap like an inverted basin, in which were stuck various feathers, the number of feathers and the length

of their pipe stems (generally worn slung over their backs) denoting their rank ! The breeches and vest were patched designedly with materials of every colour, making them look like human rainbows !

On our return journey round the camp, we called on the Patriarch. He is the hereditary head of the Assyrian nation, temporally and spiritually, and dates his ancestry, I believe, in a perfectly straight line from the first Christian Bishops of Antioch.

Mar Shim'un (the Patriarch—generally called the " Patriarch of the East ") governs all the tribal chieftains and headmen of the villages. They are appointed and discharged by him. He also consecrates Metropolitans and Bishops, and ordains priests and deacons. Loyalty to him has been perfect in all ways. No oath was considered final in an ordinary way unless taken on the *Askima* (throne) of Mar Shim'un, or by the head of Mar Shim'un—then the oath was absolutely unbreakable. He was the most beloved figure, the pillar and centre of all confidences of the nation.

The religion is that of the Nestorians, followers of the Monk Nestorius, who was a schismatic from the original church. But there is, after all, very little in the Nestorian church to differentiate it from the original teachings, and the points insisted upon by Nestorius are somewhat obscure.

With the exception of the Patriarch and his sister, who have always to take a vow of celibacy, the priests are non-celibate.

" Surma Khanoum " (the Patriarch's sister) was a charming personality, a handsome brunette with white hair, but a young face. She spoke English perfectly.

On entering the tent I was introduced all round, and chairs were placed in a circle. We were given coffee and cakes, but conversation except with Surma Khanoum

was not general, as we could not speak Syriac. However, Mr. Charge, F.'s nice A.P.O., spoke the language fluently and interpreted for us.

So the days passed—days of dreaming and of peace—nothing much happening, except the happenings that happened to me. The heat went on steadily. The desert lay bare to the sun, forever swimming in a heat of haze, while palpitating hot sand sent out burning rays over the shadowless land. I think the sun was particularly vindictive that summer, and July had almost burnt itself out when, one day, towards the end of the month, I was sitting rather late in the morning at my writing-desk struggling with accounts (never my strong point), busily counting on my fingers, and on my toes too, when the others failed. It *was* hot work, and I thought a dust-storm must be brewing—the air was breathless. Pomegranate had just put her head in at the door, and in her priceless English announced " my swim was ready ! " Incidentally " my swim " was my tub. It was about four feet in circumference. I was just rising joyfully to splash in " my swim " when suddenly, out of nowhere, there came a mighty rushing wind. My hair, my mouth and my eyes were choked with dust—followed by an appalling crash ! Had a water-tank burst ? Or had spontaneous combustion actually materialized ? My heart jumped into my mouth. The servants came tearing in, sandy-faced and sandy-haired, crying " Khanoum ! Khanoum ! The house is falling." The Bible warning of a house built on the sand flashed through my mind, and then, greatly daring—but also strangely fearful—with thumping heart and wobbling legs, I staggered from the room to find—the entire roof of the kitchen had taken to itself the wings of the morning, and was skidding merrily over the desert out of sight ! We were in the throes of a dust-storm !

After about half an hour, we crawled out of the débris, and, Glory be!—the rest of the roof still held. Sadly, we took to our mops and mopped! But "it made me weep to see such quantities of sand." The immortal "Alice" knew all about it in Wonderland—that's sure!

To show what a really abandoned person I am, the next day I was sick—not a dangerous sickness, no! Just home-sickness. I had lost the champagne touch. My sweet sunny kindly nature had vanished! In fact, I was beginning to feel a bit "fed-up" with the sun!

With a sigh, I thought of past comforts; of porcelain baths; of nice spring mattresses and "down" cushions; of my books; and oh! my friends; of the taxis in London, the omnibuses and hurrying crowds; and heaps and heaps of other things. There is no doubt I had caught it badly! "Another sigh-ee! And then a tiny tear came in my eye-ee!"—and, oh! I don't quite know what for, but I suppose (in fact I'm *sure*) that horrid sand had got into my eyes.

Just as I was feeling as companionable as a tombstone, of course F. came in! And, of course, he saw! And, of course, I gave a sickly smile—and, well—All's well that ends well!

But the upshot was that he insisted on my going to the Persian Hills for August. It was no use resisting, the fiat had gone forth.

There is a little oasis on the Persian Hills called Kermanshah. It lies on the Pilgrim road between Karind and Hamadan. During the hot months, many of the Army of Occupation—including nursing sisters—were sent up there to recoup or to spend their leave. So it was decided to Kermanshah I should go. The great difficulty, however, was to find a place to lay my head. Hotels, of course, were non-existent, and no

accommodation was provided for visitors of any sort. The sisters had their own quarters, and the officers and men their tents. So, not to put too fine a point on it, I was " the odd man out."

Finally a room was found for me at the American Mission, and to Mr. Stead's hospitality I was much indebted for a temporary lodging!

CHAPTER XXIII

ALONG THE GREAT HIGHWAY INTO PERSIA (THE ROMANCE OF THE ROAD)

IT is not only a long, long way, but it is a long, long road into Persia, and a road full of romance and thrilling interest. Somehow, I think, of all the inanimate things of nature, the Great Highways of the world seem most in sympathy with human beings. In a strange subtle manner they have touched the pulse of life, and so gained an inexhaustible individuality. They have grown, too, with the triumphs of men, and often dwindled into insignificance again with their disasters. At times, I think, they have helped even to form their joys and their sorrows, their romance and oftener still their death! Perhaps one of the Greatest Highways in the whole history of the world is this long Pilgrim road to Persia. Could its stones have spoken, they would have told of the glittering hosts of Cyrus treading them to dust as he swept through Mesopotamia to Babylon. Of the many, many times the conquering legions of Darius passed and repassed over them, between the years 520 B.C. to 485. Of Xerxes, too, with his myriad armies. The very rocks, heavy with age, which stand as sentinels along the Highway, bear testimony to the march of centuries, for on their rugged surfaces are strange

carvings which have defied the elements for 2,500 years !*

The Great Highway has watched, too, Semiramis, Queen of Egypt, with her brilliant cortège, encamp beneath the shadows of those giant rocks. Up these mountain-paths, carrying all before him, came Alexander the Great to conquer Persia, until finally he reached Hamadan, the stronghold of the Medes. There in its old citadel he found vast riches stored—all the gold and jewels of the great King Media. Later came the Parthian hosts, and then about the fifth century the Prophet Mohammed. Still later followed Nadir Shah (Persia's soldier and deliverer) on his victorious raid into India, when he carried off the beautiful Peacock Throne from Delhi, which is to this day in the Shah's Palace at Teheran.

Coming down to our own times, it is astonishing to think that no less than six armies in nine months have marched with weary feet this long road. The great silent rocks have echoed to the voices of Turks, Russians and British—truly a mighty record in the world's history !

But though the old Highway has its memories of conquering armies and of clashing arms, it has, too, its peaceful side. For many centuries pilgrim feet have trodden that winding caravan route down to Mesopotamia. They have come from far-away Afghanistan, from the snows of Russia, and from all the provinces of Persia to visit the tomb of Hussein at Kerbela, and also the sacred city of Nejef, which is really the heart of the Shiah Moslem World.

Many have motored the whole Pilgrim road from Baghdad into Persia. Much as I was tempted to do so,

* For many of these historical facts I am indebted to Padre Clifton (a well known authority on Persia).

it was not thought feasible, so I had to be content with the usual train journey part of the way to Quaritu, which was then the railhead (now I believe it is Khanikin). From Quaritu it is, roughly speaking, a motor drive of about one hundred and twenty miles to Kermanshah.

But, to return to the night I started. What a glorious night it was! The great white disc of the moon hung just above the horizon, lighting up the desert till it appeared like a shimmering silver sea. A myriad stars looked down on us from the roof of the world, and I thought of the great Chaldean astronomers, those three Wise Men of the East, who had read the mystery of the heavens so clearly that they were enabled to see the first act in the biggest drama the world has known.

After a "Farewell" friendly dinner at the mess, F. and one or two of the officers came to see me off. We had our own station at the camp (if it can be dignified by such a name). It consisted, as a matter of fact, of a couple of tents, with an Indian stationmaster. Here, however, the train stopped, and once again Little Box, Band Box, Bundle and I went travelling! this time accompanied by an Assyrian man and maid to look after us.

Travelling in the East, to my mind, is far preferable to anything in Europe in spite of *wagon-lits* and other luxuries, for here one has a large compartment to one's self, one's own bedding, and servants to fend for one. The only drawback usually is the lighting arrangements —one has either to sit up by "a misty lantern's murky light" or to go to bed!

A great deal of shouting along the line, and of flag-wagging, and slowly the train began to move. Everybody waved to me and wished me well; but, when I saw

F. standing there smiling, and thought of him returning alone to the little tent home, with those weary hot months in front of him—well, I didn't like it a bit. I felt very incomplete—with a rather empty feeling. So I just had to swallow hard two or three times (for luck), and then, since I had to descend to mundane things, I wrapped myself up—not in my old stable jacket, but my eider-down quilt, and refused to think.

At dawn the next morning my handmaid brought me a cup of tea, and I felt in a more "mellow" mood. Pomegranate was no longer with me, her people having refused to part with her. My buxom lady's-maid was now "Aarsnic"! Rather a dangerous name for a *femme de chambre!* However, she coyly intimated that it meant diamond! A rough diamond, perhaps, but a dear, kind old soul. I soon began to get quite fond of Aarsnic!

At 7.30, with many gurgles, grunts and blood-curdling whistles, the train stopped in "pandemonium!" It was really Quaritu, the railhead, but for the first few purgatorial moments it seemed like H–ll! A crowd at once besieged the door, and here "Samuel," my Assyrian boy, showed remarkable qualities as a courier. Through dust and heat and noise and motor-cars, he fought his way to glory, making a passage for me to the mess-tent, where I had breakfast. There, to my joy, I met Mr. Gibson from our camp, who simply took all worry off my hands. He sat me down under a *punkah* and left me like a parcel "to be called for." (It's a most restful feeling.) But Mr. Gibson was not idle. In half an hour he returned with two Ford cars and a "Tin Lizzie" for luggage. (In Mesopotamian vernacular, as elsewhere, this means a Vanette car.) We all bundled in together, he and I in one Ford, and the servants and luggage behind in the others. Then began our one

hundred and twenty miles' trek over the long Pilgrim road.

Well, long live Persia! The land of the Lion and the Sun. We were actually over the border and awa'. Iraq was behind us. Now we were in "Iran." In front of us stretched the long, long road to thrill us with memories of the past. But first and foremost my desert eyes ached for the balm of shade—soon I should see flowers and trees and water. How good for tired eyes! Do you like great barren hills, grey and brown? I don't—not altogether. Do you like a colourless sky? It leaves me cold, though here and there a rivulet came singing along the roadside to cheer one! Anyhow, that is Persia.

Our first halting-place was Sar-i-pul (meaning head of bridge). In the Bible it is mentioned, I believe, as Halah, the modern name being Halwan (see I. Kings, chapter 17). Sennacherib, King of the Assyrians, is said to have visited the place on his way from Samaria, bringing hundreds of captives in his train. These he placed at Sar-i-pul. There are carvings here, too, dating from Elamite and Babylonian days. A little way up, along a steep zigzag path, I was told there were two strange cuttings in the mountains. These, of course, we did not stop to inspect, but they are the old Zagros Gates, where the Persians vainly tried to build a wall in order to prevent the conquering armies of Alexander from entering their country. Leaving the motor road, and a little further on, is a smooth place on one of the rocks named Dukan-i-Daud (or the shop of David), and is said to be his tomb. The Arabs often bring sacrifices of sheep and goats to the shrine, though the tomb itself is now empty. Under the tomb is the carving of an old Persian priest, his face covered by a cloth. This was always worn by Zoroastrian fire-

worshippers, I suppose to protect themselves from the heat of the flames.

There is a legend, told by the wild muleteers who visit the shrine, that David worked as a smith here, making the finest coats of mail armour. Strangely enough it is mentioned, I believe, in the Mohammedan Koran that "David was a maker of coats of mail," the knowledge having been bestowed on him by the Angel Gabriel!

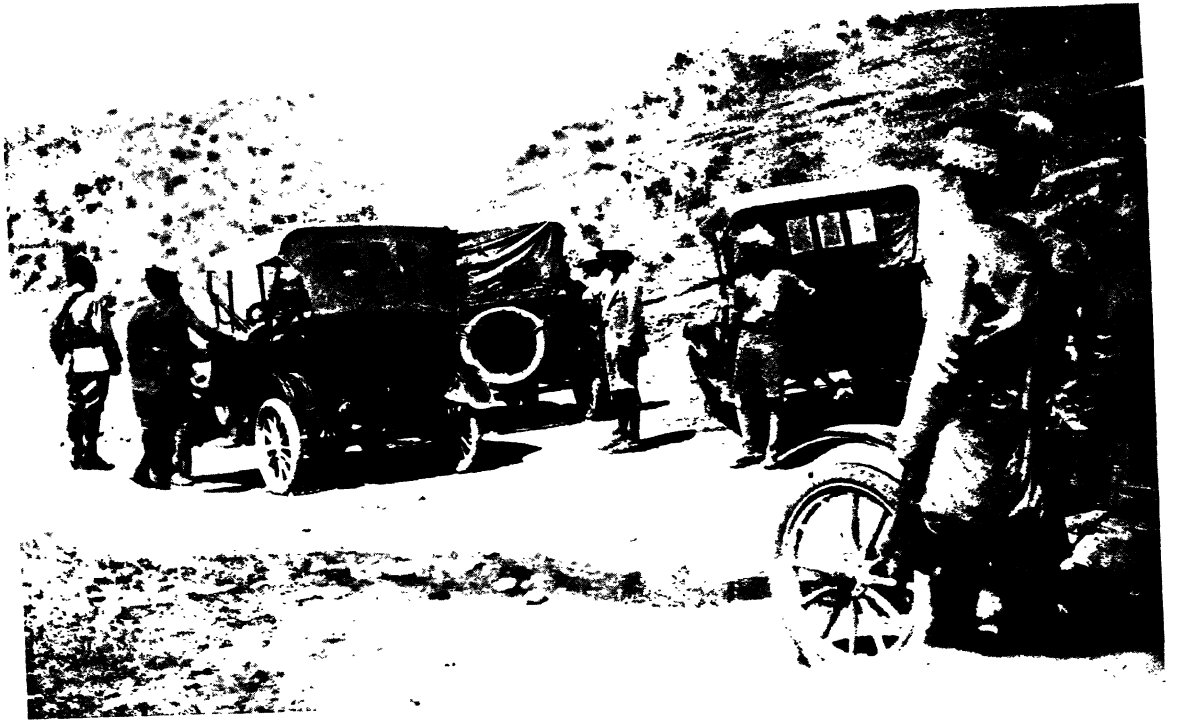
After Sar-i-pul there is a very steep ascent to be negotiated until Paitak is reached. The road coils like a serpent round high barren hills on the one side, with generally a deep drop on the other, making it dangerous for motoring. I held my breath as we swung round corners, clinging to the side of the mountain by our eyebrows! The country, too, is bare of vegetation, save a few straggling trees and scrub, now and again varied by a stream of water.

At Paitak there is little of interest to be seen, only an old broken arch, probably a fort in former days. It is, I believe, called the Arch of Cyrus.

At the top of the Paitak gorge we reached more level ground, and a short run brought us to Karind, where a British regiment was quartered. Everywhere we saw the little white tents, with all the paraphernalia of a large camp. Here we stopped for lunch, and enjoyed the hospitality of the mess.

Karind is very much frequented by the Persians, who find it a convenient halting-place on their way to and from Hamadan, or even further north.

I was told a story illustrating the gratitude of the Persians. It appears a certain rich man, wishing to help his countrymen, built a caravanserai at Karind for the use of travellers and pilgrims; but human nature being as it is, and owing to the jealousy of another man, the



A Motor Convoy on the route to Akra. [*To face p.* 132

rich one's generosity was rewarded—by having his eyes put out!

After lunch we certainly felt "gladder." But, alas! vainly we scanned the horizon for Samuel! for Aarsnic! for the Tin Lizzie with the luggage! No sign, no vestige nor ghost of a car in sight. These tragedies with trunks were beginning to get distinctly wearying.

My boxes seemed somehow to possess a malicious delight in getting detached from me.

"Cheer up," said my companion kindly. "They'll turn up; never fear."

"Oh!" I replied, laughing, "I feel like the Irishman who regretted parting with his box to such an extent that at every station he popped his head out of the window and inquired anxiously: 'Can yer tell me now, is me thrunk orl right?'

"'Arrah be aisy,' said the guard soothingly, 'yer thrunk's orl right.' After the third time of asking the guard could stand no more and shouted back: 'Faith, then, it bates me entirely why the Almighty didn't make yer an elephant instead of an auld ass that yer trunk might be firmly attached to yer."

"It's the only certain method of not losing 'yer thrunk,'" I said dejectedly.

To which obvious truth Mr. Gibson made no reply.

Another ten minutes of wasted energy in scanning the road, and we gave it up; deciding to take up the long trail once more without servants or other impedimenta.

Then followed "Inferno." It was just the hottest hour of the day; the wind was scorching, but willy-nilly, in spite of heat, dust and bumps, we had to continue. Our limit of endurance was getting exhausted when kindly Nature stepped in and we both fell asleep

And so, for five solid hours, I think, we sat side by side, solemnly colliding, bumping and rebounding to every lurch of the car.

The romance of the road had fled, for along the old Highway there is really nothing of further historical interest until Kermanshah is reached.

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CHAPTER XXIV

ARRIVAL AT KERMANSHAH

KERMANSHAH is a charming little oasis town, surrounded by hills. Formerly, I believe, it was in the valley, but the town itself never seems to have been built with any method. It has just " happened " ! gradually moving up the mountains until now it nestles at the foot of the great Paro range of hills which end at Bis-i-tun.

In former years, I believe, Kermanshah was always a turbulent centre in history, for here the Khurds and Lurs were continually at war.

As the evening lights were falling, we turned off the great Highway and drove into Kermanshah. After the dust and glare, it seemed as if one had suddenly entered Nirvana—a haven of peace, of cool green shade and tranquillity itself. Now and again the restfulness was broken by the clash and jingle of bells, seeming to ring out a welcomé to us. These sounds, we found, proceeded from a cortège of mules and camels, around whose necks were suspended brass bells, giving the most deliciously melodious notes.

In spite of everything I would willingly have lingered to watch the charm of that sylvan scene, for it seems at sunset the animals wend their way down to the various streams and rivulets to drink, the gay trappings of the

mules blending their bright colourings into opal tints as they move slowly in and out under the dancing shadows of tall poplars. It was an enchanting picture framed by the encircling purple hills, their loveliness half veiled by pink clouds, "which now and again seemed torn asunder as if by giant fingers," revealing an almost unearthly beauty in the soft, falling light.

I dropped my sleeping partner (still only half awake) at the Officers' Rest Camp, and then with eyes almost shutting on me the car dashed forward once more and drew up at the Mission House. Mr. Stead, the American missionary, was not at home. I was met at the entrance by half a dozen black piccaninnies—shock-headed and suffering from some fell disease, I believe, called Pink Eye! There were sixty of them in the Orphanage, all pink-eyed, and my heart turned to glue. But it was not at their heads or eyes I gazed, but at their legs and chemises. Each wore one single garment which stopped short never to grow again, somewhere about the region of their—well, upper calves!

"Weary, worn and sad" I got into the car and drove to the Sisters' Quarters, there to beg a cup of tea. Evidently I was the sport of fate. A gala performance was in full swing, and a Ghurka band was bursting itself on the terrace. Sounds of laughter and tinkling cups fell on my jaded senses. In the cool shade of a Persian garden "fair women and brave men" were seated at tables drinking tea. Into this scene of revelry I came, the unbidden guest, without a wedding garment. Bedraggled, bespattered, betousled, caked with dust, suddenly I found myself swept into the giddy vortex. There was no doubt "Life" was playing a game of football with me, hurling me hither and thither like a bouncing ball. With the courage of despair I risked my moral reputation—my eternal salvation—my all—for a

cup of tea; and, greatly daring—bounced in! *Thus* I made my début into Kermanshah society!

My next vivid recollection was being accompanied back later to the Mission House by Miss Jones (the matron in chief), in order to search for my quarters. I found them in the Mission dispensary. This had been turned into a temporary bedroom for me. And there, in the gloaming, I sat me down and waited—and my soul yearned with a great yearning for the child Samuel!—for Aarsnic!—for the luggage! Meanwhile I was an object of absorbing interest to all the orphans. From every angle of the garden, the window and the door, they gave me the "glad Pink Eye." It was a misery of a day. But this was the limit—grubby, peevish and hot I was in no mood to be trifled with. *I was out for blood!*

Oh little Piccaninnies in your sketchy short chemises!
If you want to spare my blushes, do not frolic in the breezes!
I've no wish for your conversion, for the devil only knows
I'd gladly sell your souls to buy your little bodies clothes!
You're the bane of my existence when you creep about the floor
And with bloodshot eyes and lurid grin at me thro' the door.
Well! it's more than I can suffer and I'm blessed if I will try,
So I warn you, do not trifle with my cold, "grey" eye.

About nine o'clock in the evening Samuel and Aarsnic, two jaded worm-like objects, crawled out of the old Tin Lizzie—they had broken down three times and had walked five miles to the nearest depôt before obtaining fresh cars. Poor, poor souls. I positively purred with delight when I saw them.

CHAPTER XXV

A VISIT TO TAG-I-BISTAN AND THE STORY OF QUEEN SHERIN

AFTER a mosquito-ish night I awoke next morning to the disappointing fact that Kermanshah was not so cool as I had been led to suppose, though better, infinitely better, than the sun-baked desert. Anyway, I am an incorrigible optimist, and hidden away somewhere in the depths of my being there is generally an undercurrent of joy which bubbles up to the surface when it gets the chance. For the moment a sound of running water near my window and the soft crooning of the morning breeze through the poplars made my spirits rise—after all, it was good to be alive—it only needed F. " thrown in " to make my gladness complete. Thoughts, however, are unruly things and would sometimes independently take to themselves wings and fly off on their own—to deserts and places. It was arranged that I should mess at the Sisters' Hostel, which, to my amazement in the daylight, I found was but a stone's throw from the Mission bungalow. There I betook me for breakfast. Miss West, who was in charge of the Club, was also the matron at our hospitals in Baqubah. Consequently, I was not entirely amongst strangers. The Sisters' Hostel was a delightful place ; it was a cool, roomy house with an attractive terraced garden. As a rule, the exteriors of Persian houses are somewhat insignificant in appearance. This, however, is quite

misleading and intentionally done I was told. It appears that in former years the inhabitants had to be perpetually on the defensive against bands of robbers, so they generally built their houses windowless to the street, with only a small entrance, thus making, as it were, a natural defence against sudden attack from without, but once inside the whole aspect changes. The houses are built round an inner garden, one side of which is the summer quarters, cool and shady, the other getting all the sunshine for colder months; and Persia can be extraordinarily rigorous during the winter. The nights and early mornings are intensely cold, though during the day there is always sunshine and the air is sparkling and crisp. Persians themselves are a home-loving people. In the summer they practically "live and move and have their being" in their gardens. Here they spread their carpets, drink their tea, smoke their water pipes and invite their friends. Three things they consider essential to contentment in a garden, namely, flowers, music and a sense of peace. Indeed, Persian gardens are a real joy to their owners. They are alive with colour and beauty; there are flashes of gay flowers everywhere, usually in sunken beds, and the air is "sweet as a bee's breath for fragrance." Their music is the song of the wind through swaying branches of poplars. (These trees are always a great feature in their gardens.) For peace there is ever the sound of running water or the soft splash of a playing fountain to soothe the weary into forgetfulness. It is Nature's own music, with an orchestra of birds. Perhaps it is the vivid contrast to the glare and barren aspect of the country outside which make a Persian garden seem such a delectable place. Its inviting shade appears at first sight almost like a glimpse of Paradise. Some of these gardens we might consider nothing but orchards. There are no flowers,

only fruit trees, mostly consisting of vines and pomegranates, which grow in wild profusion, though other fruit is also cultivated, such as apples, pears, peaches and cherries. Everyone is freely invited to enter, and the owners are delighted to see you pick and eat as much as you wish, on condition, however, that none is taken away. It is a most charming trait, I think, of Oriental hospitality.

After breakfast mine host (Mr. Stead) showed me over the Orphanage, of which he was intensely proud; he is a man who has devoted his life to the conversion and training of Khurdish and Persian children, and in return they adore him. His splendid energy in succouring the Christian refugees as they fled through Kermanshah to Baqubah was beyond praise. Much, however, as I appreciated his kindness, I found the little pink-eyed piccaninnies a trial, and later the British Consul (Major Weir) was good enough to offer me a room at the Consulate. There, with his altogether attractive wife, I spent several weeks of comfort and happiness. Kermanshah that summer was gay. There were dances, moonlight picnics, dinners and tennis parties. Had I been a nursing sister I should have considered it the time of my life, for that year they were the only unmarried representatives of the fair sex in the whole of Persia and Mesopotamia. After the endless round of hospital wards and daily routine it was but natural they should thoroughly enjoy their liberty, consequently the business of "making hay while the sun shone" and while the world was yet young occupied them fully!

One delightful picnic I shall always remember. It was to Tag-I-Bistan, a place full of interesting romance, and within an easy motor run of about twenty-four miles from Kermanshah. The weather was now beginning to

be cooler and resembled an English summer. There was a feeling of high adventure and gaiety in the dancing air the morning we started on our picnic, which consisted of three motor-cars, personally conducted by Padre Clifton (and what Padre Clifton did not know about Persia and Persian legends was not worth knowing). Consequently, I felt we were starting under the best auspices.

Having seen us all tucked into the cars and packed around with baskets of food and drinks, the procession started. Once outside the little Kermanshah oasis, we found ourselves again on the old Highway and making north-east for Hamadan. Spinning along the road for about twenty miles, we at last branched off to the left and headed for Tag-I-Bistan, which lay about five miles further on beyond a belt of trees now just distinguishable. In front of us a brown plain stretched away into the distance and a chain of hills whose crests stood out against the sky-line as though carved in deep amber and jade. Ten minutes later we were at Tag-I-Bistan.

Here was an enclosed arch hollowed out of a gigantic rock which towered above our heads. On the walls of the archway were engraved many strange carvings. The Padre was now in his element; as "guide, philosopher and friend" there was no one to touch him.

We followed like a flock of sheep, drinking in every word while he pointed out to us the various objects of interest, until towards the end I felt like nothing on earth but just a walking Ear and Eye! The carvings depicted mostly the achievements of King Khusru-Parviz (the Conqueror), one of Persia's greatest monarchs. Every incident of the chase and all the glories of his reign were inscribed on the stones or walls in a most elaborate manner, together with pictures of himself and his beautiful Christian Queen Sherin (meaning "Sweet One").

Amongst her other attractions the Queen was a great sportswoman, and the arch was supposed to have been built in order that she might watch the animals driven past, these animals being enclosed in an enormous park for her benefit and solely for the pleasures of the chase. Sherin was, I believe, the first woman polo player in Persia, polo being the great national game of the people. The tragic story of Queen Sherin and her artist-lover is one of the most popular and widely sung in Persia. We begged the Padre to relate it to us, which he promised to do. Away from the archway on another of the great rugged rocks was an image of Zoroaster erect on a sunflower (the emblem of Mithras) and dating from 800 B.C. It is, I believe, the only authentic figure known of the prophet. After we had wandered about and made ourselves thoroughly hot clambering over innumerable little goat paths, we returned to the caravanserai. This was simply a collection of caves hollowed out of the rock by the side of a large basin of water and practically the only bit of shade in the place. It made me understand the Bible words, " The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In the cool underground caves we laid our picnic lunch, spreading it on the floor, Eastern fashion (chairs being superfluous luxuries), and then, reclining around the festive meal, the Padre recounted to us the story of Queen Sherin and Farhad, her lover.

Once upon a time, on a fair morning long ago, a beautiful Assyrian girl named Sherin went with other maidens to a stream to bathe, and it happened that the great King Khusru-Parviz on his return from the chase chanced to pass by. Hearing sounds of laughter and merriment, he dismounted and, parting the bushes at the side of the stream, beheld the lovely Sherin with her luxuriant hair like a cloak about her. He was so bewitched with her beauty that he fell in love with her

on the spot and there and then determined to lose no time in making her his Queen. Finding the damsel was not unwilling, he mounted her on his fleet black horse Shabuiz and galloped away. Now Sherin, though a Christian maiden, far from resenting her pagan lover's wooing, is said to have kissed him several times on the neck, and whenever she kissed him (so the story relates) there was left the sign of the Cross.

It so chanced that among the many courtiers at King Khusru-Parviz's palace was a renowned sculptor named Farhad, who became desperately enamoured of Sherin's beauty and is said to have boldly asked the King to relinquish her to him. The latter, not wishing to make an enemy of the handsome and popular Farhad, promised in jest to bestow Sherin upon him provided Farhad performed the difficult task of bringing water from the back of Bis-I-Tun rock into the roadway, an engineering feat considered quite impossible. Nothing daunted, however, and burning with a love which made all things possible, Farhad set out to perform his task. After surmounting innumerable difficulties, he succeeded in boring a hole through the great rock and carrying the water by syphon to the roadway. (It is a wonderful piece of work which can be seen to this day.) A Persian poet describes it thus :

> " On lofty Bis-I-Tun the lingering sun
> Looks down on ceaseless labours, long begun ;
> The misty night around her summit coils
> But still Farhad, the lover-artist, toils."

Having accomplished this gigantic task, Farhad returned triumphant on the wings of love to claim the beautiful Sherin, only to be told by the crafty King that the Queen (whom he had meanwhile concealed) was dead. Overcome with grief and feeling his efforts fruitless, Farhad in despair is said to have thrown

himself from the top of Bis-I-Tun rock, dashing himself to the ground, the mountains echoing his last expiring cry, "Eh! Sherin, eh! Sherin" (My sweet one, my sweet one).

> "Far in the wide expanse his axe he flung,
> And from the precipice at once he sprung;
> The rocks, the sculptured caves, the valley green
> Sent back his dying cry, Alas! Sherin!"

Bis-I-Tun, the scene of poor Farhad's tragedy, is on the direct route to Hamadan and not many miles from Kermanshah. It was there Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered the "key" to the cuneiform characters, those wonderful rock-carvings over which savants had puzzled so long. Thus, through the untiring efforts of one man, it is now possible to read inscriptions on all clay tablets throughout the world! I believe Sir Henry Rawlinson spent £1,000 from his private income in order to carry on his researches.

But already the shadow of the great rock had visibly lengthened beside us, and beyond the distant "amber and jade" mountains the sun was sending us scarlet signals of farewell. It was too late to proceed further —Bis-I-Tun would have to be postponed for another picnic.

CHAPTER XXVI

MY LIFE IN PERSIA

LONG live the Persian post! It has brought me a letter from F. to say: "Am motoring up for three days' leave, so good-bye to heat and dust and work for a bit." When all's said and done it's not such a bad old world after all! To-day there's a sparkle in the air that belongs only to the morning and a delicious whiff of syringa comes through my window and taps on the pane, while a stray bit of "morning glory" has blown round the corner just to remind me how lovely the Consulate garden is looking. I can sit behind my pen no longer, for somehow, outside the trees look greener, and the sky more blue than yesterday. So I shall take my sketching things and hie me to one of those orchard gardens the Persians love.—Well! it's glad I am that alive I am! Hardly had I emerged from the gateway when there came a thud of hoofs, a whirl of dust and a wild horseman with billowing cloak pulled his steed up in mid-career, almost at my feet! He was the most picturesque figure I have ever seen. Over a loose white robe he wore a flowing black *burnous* embroidered at the neck with gold; round his head was twisted a scarf of many colours, and across his shoulders was slung a villainous-looking rifle! The mare which he rode was adorned like himself with gay trappings—a

necklace of blue beads, a red-fringed saddle-cloth and plaited bridle. This completed the effect. Behind the two trotted a baby colt, who was just as frightened as I was.

The Persians, like the Arabs, nearly always ride mares, and it is a common sight to see them ambling across the desert with a weary little foal struggling to keep up at an infantile gallop. After ascertaining I was still alive, he curvetted about on his steed to show off his horsemanship, and then, wheeling round suddenly, disappeared from view in a cloud of dust.

It was not far to the orchard, but I loitered on the way to watch the little homely scenes of Persian daily life around me. Far away in the distance I heard the plaintive music of a reed flute, a goatherd piping to his flock, while the tinkle of their bells as they followed, rose and fell in gentle rhythm on the morning air. Down the dusty road from the Sisters' Hostel came staggering donkeys laden with sun-baked bricks, or with great rush panniers heaped up with water-melons, their peasant drivers slouching along beside them clad in dirty blue garments and black felt caps. Blue is the Persian colour; mules, camels and horses are nearly always adorned with blue beads, for blue is the colour to ward off the evil eye! The magic atmosphere of the East seemed to cast a glamour all its own over the most ordinary objects. It has always held a strange fascination for me. The broken walls on either side of the dusty lane I traversed looked beautiful, framed as they were in a sky of turquoise, while over the crumbling bricks great clumps of bougainvillæa fell in wild confusion or hung in graceful festoons from overhanging branches, making splashes of vivid magenta against the sky. Even the old mud water-towers (which one sees everywhere in Persia) were glorified and gilded by the brilliant

sunshine until they appeared like mediæval fortresses or magic castles. Passing by the side of a dwelling I noticed long strands of worsted stretched at full length against the plastered wall in blue, scarlet and orange. These had evidently just been dyed for carpet making, Kermanshah being one of the centres for this industry. Miss Ella Sykes, in her interesting book on Persia, describes how the workers in the factories—mostly, alas! quite young children—sit at hand-looms while the pattern is sung out by the overseer: "Two red—four yellow, turn to the right for grounding—six blue!" the children singing back in treble voices: "Two red—four yellow to place—have eaten six blue!" and so on. Poor little mites, their bodies are often sadly twisted and bent like the strands of wool they weave. No carpets are ever made exact, each side usually being different, for, according to the Mohammedan law, "God alone creates perfection and it is not for man to presume to do so!" The designs, however, on many carpets are taken from Biblical subjects, for it seems with the ancients carpet weaving was a sort of ritualistic ceremony, the Tree pattern, for instance, being typical of the Garden of Eden and of the Tree of Life, while the animals sometimes worked on their carpets are borrowed from the story of the Ark, nearly all dating their origin from far-away Mesopotamian days. As I continued my walk, I perceived at a little distance two big black bundles seemingly flung into a ditch. I concluded they had probably fallen off some beast of burden. To my surprise when I approached they suddenly stirred, got up and waddled away! These were Persian women, shapeless masses of humanity, clothed in unsightly black garments and having the whole of their faces hidden. A few yards further on I met friends on their way to the "Hussanieh," an interesting building only open on

certain days to the public. They invited me to accompany them, which I gladly did, for it is one of the most unique places to visit in Kermanshah. Thus I never got to my orchard garden after all!

In the Hussanieh there is a representation in coloured tiles of the Mohammedan passion play. No similar representation is to be found elsewhere in Persia. It depicts the long procession at the Mohurram of pilgrims and holy men, cutting and slashing themselves with knives in honour of Ali, one of the three lawful caliphs who succeeded Mohammed (that is according to the Shiah tenets). The women, meanwhile (on a sort of raised grand-stand), cry and weep, rending their garments. These tears shed by the faithful are considered so sacred and precious that many are preserved in bottles and applied by the priest to the lips of the dying. Around the Hussanieh are tawdry mirrors and lamps which reflect the ghastly procession. It is a chamber of horrors! The second year I visited Kermanshah it chanced I was there during the month of Mohurram and could, had I so wished, have seen the real procession, but the pictures were quite ghastly enough for my taste. At this time the people get so fanatical that it is not considered safe for Christians to enter the bazaars, especially during the last ten days of the ceremony, and I had great difficulty in keeping my boy Samuel at home, for the "lure" of the bazaar was deeply ingrained in his nature. On returning we saw one or two wild-looking fakirs or dervishes lingering round the steps of the Hussanieh. To me they were the most repulsive individuals, with their long black hair matted and unkempt, their dirty white garments and mangy old leopard-skins with which they cover their shoulders. I particularly noticed one of them had a beautifully carved begging-bowl in his hand. It appears they beg their way from place to place, receiving alms

from all whom they meet. They are, no doubt, considered by the faithful, monuments of holiness and virtue.

I find these lightning visits very unsettling. F. flew up to Kermanshah and down again (metaphorically, of course: unfortunately, in a motor one is obliged to cling to Mother Earth). It was all rather breathless, and it took me quite an hour to settle down into my calm, pastoral life once more. My thoughts were on the wing following a Vanette car in a whirl of dust down the long, long road to Mespot! Great rejoicings! I hear the roof is actually on my desert home, so in a week's time I, too, shall be migrating south. It will not be without regrets, however, that I leave this city of green trees and running water, and my heart will be charged with many unforgettable memories of kindly hospitality and good will. Somehow, in these far-away places of the earth, the little lantern (which I suppose we all carry inside to light us through a dark world) often gives a less intermittent flame than it seems to do in so-called civilized lands. Here life simplifies one's outlook. There are so many rough places along the way, so much to contend with, that we take people as we find them and forget to draw the dark shutter of artificial conventions over the flame of friendship and sincerity. And who knows but that in so doing we fit more truly into the great scheme of things?

There was one place I regretted not having had the opportunity of visiting, for although I had been six weeks in Kermanshah I had, unfortunately, been unable for various reasons to get to Hamadan. However, I comforted myself with the reflection that the following summer I would not fail to make the trip. Life in the East, however, is an uncertain commodity; it does not do to put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day, for

it so happened the following year Kermanshah was practically cut off from all communication save by aeroplane, the Bolshevists threatening to come down from the north and the Arabs from Quaritu on the south. So that those of us who were in Kermanshah at the time were unable to leave. "That, however (as Rudyard Kipling says), is another story." Hamadan, or Ecbatana, as it was known to the ancients, was old even in Daniel's time! It was the capital of the great Medean Empire. Here Xerxes (or Ahasuerus, as he is spoken of in the Bible) built a summer palace for the beautiful Queen Esther after Vashti had been dethroned from his favour. "And the King loved Esther above all women and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown upon her head and made her Queen instead of Vashti."

The tombs of both Mordecai the Jew and Esther the Queen are preserved and shown to visitors at Hamadan. "For Mordecai the Jew was next unto the King Ahasuerus and great among the Jews. . . . And all the declarations of the greatness of Mordecai whereunto the King advanced him, are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Medea and Persia?"

Over the desert had come to me one long piercing wail of agony, the burden of which was Baqubah camp was "dry!" No more beer in the canteens for months until the next shipload arrived. It cut me to the quick. "God bless you merry gentlemen" (quoth I to myself), "I swear with my hand on my heart you shall have your beer or I perish in the attempt! And, what's more, on my return you shall give me a right royal welcome to boot!" Here was I, the laziest lady in Persia, eating all day

long, sleeping all night, while the men, God bless 'em, were pining for a drink! It was unthinkable.

For aught I knew to the contrary, it was against regulations to smuggle beer out of Persia into Mespots! But *toujours l'audace.* The position was desperate. After consulting several male heads who were sympathetic (but had nothing to do with the regulations), I sallied forth to the Ordnance Canteen and supply depôts. Life's but a bagatelle, after all, I said, and stepped lightly in. Of course my moral reputation was in the hands of the Ordnance officer, but I felt when I saw him he was discretion and virtue personified. We had a heart-to-heart talk, with the result that a little later I emerged laden with booty. With feelings of pardonable pride (or perhaps a swollen head), I carried away two sacks of potatoes, two dozen bottles of beer, besides bags of currants, raisins and ginger, all these delicacies being unobtainable in our camp. Full well I knew, alas! two dozen bottles of beer were but a drop in the ocean, but I accepted the same with thanks, for as Aarsnic wisely remarked on my return, "To-day's egg is better than to-morrow's fowl!" The next morning I bade farewell to Kermanshah.

Colonel Lakin, who was in charge of the Persian line of communications (better known as "Percoms"), kindly took me down in his comfortable Vauxhall car as far as the railhead. Samuel and Aarsnic followed in a Vanette, firmly seated on the beer and potatoes! It was, perhaps, an irony of fate that Colonel Lakin, the Commanding Officer in Kermanshah, should have been my companion that day, but, as he was "one of the best," I do not believe he would have been too severe. So "Here's to him" in a flagon of sack (when I get over the border), and no heel-taps, gentlemen.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DESERT

Where the fiery red horizon blends into the burning sand,
Where your footsteps lag and falter in a dry and sun-baked land,
Where the mirage lures you onward—on thro' scrub and blinding glare,
And where vultures, big and swollen, gorged with carrion blink and stare!
There in awful desolation, shadowless 'neath open sky—
Ruthless Nature stalks relentless, every weakling has to die—
—Miss the track—then heaven help you, for each ghastly mile-stone seems,
Bleaching-bones of man or camel—*This* is what the Desert means.

AT four o'clock the following morning I arrived at Baqubah camp station. F. had thoughtfully arranged for my railway carriage to be slipped and shunted on to a siding in order that I might not be disturbed until he could fetch me at a decorous hour. But I could not sleep. There was always something about the Desert in Mesopotamia which fascinated and yet repelled me. Something sinister and evil which held me somehow in thrall by its very immensity. On either side of me white-robed Arabs lay motionless, sleeping. I could see the faint outline of their camels, weary like themselves. —A great sense of loneliness possessed me. All around was a vast silence—the silence of centuries. In the dead stillness of this early hour only the Desert and I seemed

to be awake, watching! It was an eerie feeling. Perhaps it was my overwrought fancy, but to me the air was full of voices. Drifting down the years they floated like wraiths of bygone days, borne upon the night wind like echoes, calling to me, illusive and far-away.

Cries of age-long suffering, haunting memories of Isaac, of Ishmael in the desert, of Abraham too, and Abel, and Hagar (the bondwoman). Their voices seemed to mingle one with another, and to my heated fancy to rise on the errant wings of night like ghostly whispers which barely stirred the air. . . .

Other voices there were too—voices of those countless men and beasts who, through the long years, had perished in the sand, lured onwards by its treacherous mirage—they, too, rose and fell, and died away in sobbing wails of anguish. . . . And over this vast desolation one by one the stars came out like flickering silver lamps, and high in the heavens hung the moon—that same white moon which had looked on Abraham and upon Hagar in their agony—cold—pitiless and remote!—so infinitely remote from humanity, "from our eddy of purposeless dust." Perhaps only the moon knew the secret of the Desert? Perhaps only the moon and the stars might fathom its inscrutable Mystery?

Perhaps *they* knew? . . .

So my eyes travelled on and on into a vision of distances. Everywhere "infinite expanse of sand met infinite expanse of sky," till it faded into grey, tinged with the faint flush of dawn. Then far away on the wind of the morning came the sharp cry of a jackal, another and yet another. Strange haunting notes, doubtless they were quarrelling over the carcase of some animal, calling and answering a signal to each other the day was breaking, their hideous night's work over. Presently a dog

barked near my carriage. The sleeping Arabs stirred and rose, stretching their limbs as they muffled their heads more closely from the cool morning air. With many a gurgle and grunt the camels lifted themselves slowly from the sand. A lantern bobbed up and down the line. It was the guard on his rounds. Gradually to the east the moon faded and dawn came stealing up. I could now distinguish the long line of telegraph posts diminishing and vanishing into the gold and orange of the rising sun. In the distance was a cloud of dust coming from the direction of the camp. Nearer and nearer it approached, until with a hoot and a whistle F.'s car drew up. Thereupon the whole station suddenly galvanized into life. At the same moment the sun rose with a radiance that made all things glad.

A pæan of joy burst from me when I saw my humble cot, its roof reared proudly to the sky. "Come weal, come woe," come sandstorms, sunshine or rain, I cared not now. Stout timbers covered my defenceless head, and for that and other mercies the Lord's name be praised. Nevertheless, my troubles were not all over. Several "stained-glass" windows were conspicuous by their absence. This, together with famine in the land of beer bottles made me feel oddly vague as to how to procure sufficient before the rains set in! So September flew away on the wings of mosquitoes and without regrets on my part, for, though now on the edge of October, the weather was still excessively hot. Sandflies persistently held their own and, like the wicked, "never ceased from troubling." They are so small that it is quite impossible to see them, and they have a friendly way of burrowing under the skin, where they immediately proceed to make themselves thoroughly at home, settle down and lay their eggs! This fact accomplished, they

leave you to suffer torments of irritation. No net I ever found was fine enough to keep them out. Even armour-plate, though bullet-proof, was not proof against sandflies, at least so a young "Tank" officer informed me, and he ought to know.

My mind was now fully occupied with news that had just reached me, namely, that my boxes were lost and beyond all hope of recovery. They had left Bombay exactly six months previously addressed to Baqubah (instead of our camp station). Having arrived safely at the former place, no one apparently thought it necessary to inform us of the fact. Consequently, the baggage being unclaimed, the Arabs quietly possessed themselves of everything. This to me spelt tragedy, for now the cold weather was approaching and nothing could be replaced in Baghdad. After mature deliberation only three courses seemed open to me: (1) To dress like a Nursing Sister; (2) to don the uniform of an officer in H.M.'s forces, or to retire from public life and go to bed, there to hibernate until the spring!

The winters in Iraq are extremely cold, not to say windy. It was but a chilly prospect. There were days I almost yearned to be bedridden. These yearnings usually attacked me in the early morning when F. (manlike) tried to cheer me by whistling:

> "Little red nose
> And not much clothes,
> When the stormy winds do blow!"

I confess I found it hard to understand how anyone could make a song about it! But there, you never know what other people enjoy. At last I could stand the "stormy winds" no longer; into Baghdad I sallied, and at the Ordnance stores purchased a Sister's

grey tweed skirt and underwear, and Oh! how scratchy they were! After which I wandered round to the officers' shop and invested in a "coat warm British" and the smallest size in gum boots I could find. My fancy dress was now complete! Labelled "'Alf and 'Alf," I could have held my own at any carnival! It was indeed a shock to my vanity, but I simply *had* to laugh or I should most certainly have wept. However, Paddy's advice is the best to all in Mespots. "Be aisy, and if ye can't be aisy, be as aisy as ye can!" All the same I found it far from "aisy" to keep inside my gum boots. One day after the rains had begun and the land was covered with mud I made my début as a ballet dancer, leaving a gum boot stuck in the glutinous ooze while I poised lightly on one toe until it was dug out and replaced!

Just before the rains actually set in, and before we were more or less cut off from motoring into Baghdad, F. received a strange and rather unique visitor, no less a personage than the Chief Priest of the Devil Worshippers! These are a sect called "Yezidis" who live in the Singar mountains not far from Mosul. There they have a mosque called the Temple of Shaikh Adi, dedicated to Lucifer! Emir Shaikh Ismail Beg (chief of the Yezidis), who was sent as an emissary to visit our camp, was a most mild-looking individual; rather a tall man with a long black beard and gentle brown eyes. He was dressed in a flowing robe much resembling an Arab, with a white turban and light brown *abbas*. Knowing we were going to Mosul, he was anxious we should visit their monastery in the mountains. The Yezidis have been much persecuted by the Turks and Khurds, and consequently they are very friendly to the British, who have often interposed to protect them. On leaving, he pressed into my hand his visiting card, on which



Emir Shaikh Ismail Bey.
Chief of the Yezides (Devil worshippers).

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was engraved a peacock! This is their religious emblem and evidently H.M. Beelzebub's crest, for they consider it a sacred bird dedicated to him.

Dr. Wigram, who visited the Satanic Pontiff in his diabolical stronghold at Shaikh Adi, says: "The Yezidis believe in a Supreme Being, Yazdan the Most High, but to him they pay no worship. He is Lord of Heaven and takes no account of earth. From Yazdan emanated seven great spirits, of whom 'Melek Taüs' (or Satan) was the first and most powerful. To him was committed the creation of the world and the governance of it for 10,000 years, of which 4,000 still remain to run. Melek Taüs is an evil and fallen spirit, but not fallen beyond redemption." So the Yezidis think by being particularly respectful to the Devil he will not be unmindful of them when he returns to his own once more as a powerful Archangel in the Hierarchy of Heaven! Jesus Christ they also believe in, but only second to Lucifer. They accept the story of His life, believing, however, that He did not actually die on the Cross, Satan having spirited Him away and left an image in His place. As they consider the evil spirit the most powerful god of this world, they do not trouble to propitiate the good spirit. To him they pay no further attention for the time being!

I believe the Yezidis, strangely enough, are on quite friendly terms with the Catholic and Nestorian Christians whose countries adjoin their own, for though the Christians abhor the "Devil Worshippers," they are driven into sympathy by the common oppression of the Khurds. A few weeks after the devil's emissary had visited us the rains came down in deadly earnest and the thirsty desert was drinking up the water as fast as it could, but leaving mud and mire everywhere, in which we were generally struggling up to our knees. My

milky-way of Nestlé's tins was a godsend, and my roof was good (in parts), like the curate's egg. We were, however, more or less isolated except in the spells of fine weather, which always happen in Iraq usually after a deluge of three days, when the sun bursts out once more and warms our damp spirits and clothes. Naturally there was not much in the way of recreation or amusement in the camp at this time, so I occasionally used to accompany F. and Mr. Charge on their tours of inspection. It always interested me to see the life of the refugees, and I loved the children. They were such quaint, uncouth little people. One day in passing a tent we heard the most blood-curdling yells issuing from the interior as if a child was being murdered. Leaving F., I hastily entered and saw a little girl of about four purple in the face with rage. Her mother was trying in every way to soothe her grief; in fact, the entire family was seated round the child despairingly offering food, toys, everything, to stop the fearful din. Even the entrance of F. (the awe inspiring Director of the camp) did not terrify it to calmness. F. was disgusted and in a loud voice said to me: "Spoilt brat! I'm off." Immediately the child choked down its sobs, the mother snatched it up and began curtsying and trying to kiss F.'s hand, her face wreathed meanwhile in smiles What magic had we used? We could not understand Why this sudden calm after the storm? During the lull we got out of the tent as quickly as possible. Afterwards, to our intense surprise and amusement, Mr. Charge explained that F.'s remark, "Spoilt brat," had sounded to their ears like the Assyrian words, "*Spoy Brata*,' meaning "Good child!" The mother was, of course delighted with such a compliment to her particularly obnoxious offspring. We were chatting along the way about various camp incidents, and amongst other things

F. mentioned the difficulty there was in extracting S. and T. (Supply and Transport) sacks from the refugees. They seemed to have an unholy passion for sacking! In the meantime the Supply and Transport at Baghdad were clamouring for the return of sacks in which rations had been issued, so F. instituted search-parties in order to collect them. F. remarked laughingly: "You should see Charge. He's a perfect sleuth-hound in nosing out sacks, and finds them in the most odd unlikely places." "Where?" I questioned. "Ask him," said F. I turned inquiringly to Mr. Charge, who murmured in reply something about once having dived into a baby's cradle and unearthed a long strip of sacking which, to his surprise, he found wrapped round the infant as swaddling clothes! A good strong S. and T. sack is a priceless adjunct to a refugee's toilet.

We were entering one of the tents at the moment, and I happened to notice a young man who seemed somehow unable to move; in fact, glued to his seat and who did not rise with the others to greet us. I wondered vaguely if he was paralysed. F., however, immediately called him up. He came rather sheepishly and I thought his gait peculiar, but said nothing.—After a few sharp words from F. on his behaviour, the man was dismissed. Thereupon with exaggerated politeness he began to back from our presence treating us like royalty! Immediately Mr. Charge was on the *qui vive*. With a heavy hand on the man's shoulder, he spun him round like a top. Tableau: his wretched secret was out! for there on the rear of his trousers was a large square patch labelled S and T! How we laughed!

"Oh, I once knew a chic Refugee,
Whose pants were the *dernier cri*,
For the patch on his back was a smart canvas sack,
And he sat on the words S. and T.!"

"That's the first time the S. and T. have been so thoroughly well sat on, I warrant," said F. as we hastily retreated from the tent.

"And by a refugee, too," chuckled Mr. Charge. "It's fine!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

BABYLON

THE rain rained and the sun shone with monotonous regularity for the next month or two.

The Dyala River ran in a red turmoil between us and the village of Baqubah, while the mud oozed in sullen sluggishness over the desert, making the ground distinctly soft to the feet.

Still, there were compensations.

Christmas week in Baghdad was going to be gay; the Air Force were giving a fancy dress ball, to which we were invited, and in addition to this we had our own festivities in the shape of a big staff dinner to all the notable Assyrians and Armenians within the camp.

Christmas morning dawned fair and serene without a cloud in the sky; the rain had taken a week-end holiday and left us once more with our warm friend old King Sol!

Mr. Charge and others of F.'s staff were busy helping me to arrange the marquee tent in which our dinner was to be given.

For this festive occasion the camp was ruthlessly rifled of chairs, carpets, glass and china. By the time all was completed the effect was beyond our dreams, and I am bound to say resembled more a London drawing-room than that of "a table spread in the wilderness."

There were palms arranged in alcoves, cosy corners, and, above all, electric light, a luxury in which the camp indulged and a never failing source of pride even though occasionally it went out at critical moments. I remember at one of my dinner parties the "light that failed" as we stepped in to dinner. Each guest was obliged to supply his own *butty* (lantern) and to eat by its dismal rays!

However, at this memorable feast nothing so tragic happened, and we sat down about fifty-five guests to a groaning board.

Amongst those invited were Surma Khanoum and several of the Patriarchal family, together with leading men from Urmia and the mountains. The latter were in their picturesque costumes of rainbow tints. One of the most imposing figures was the Metropolitan of the Eastern Church attired in his long black robes and red sash. Then there was the Armenian Episcopos and several Armenian notabilities, besides ourselves and the camp staff.

Ours was decidedly a respectable banquet and blessed by most of the dignitaries of the Eastern Christian churches.

F. made a speech in English, which was translated and replied to in Syriac by the Metropolitan.

I hope we looked intelligent; we tried our best notwithstanding that the language was one of which the majority of us understood not one word!—However, by dint of much bowing, endless hand-shaking, combined with copious drinking of healths and clinking of glasses, the evening passed away. And there is no doubt the unusual effort made us sleep the sleep of the just that night. F. more especially, for he had attended services at no less than five churches, starting at 5 a.m. on Christmas morning. Nestorians, Armenians, Gre-

gorians, Roman Catholics, and Presbyterians had all wished him to be present, so for that Christmas, at least, he lived in the odour of sanctity!

The following day we went by train into Baghdad; the track across the desert was too thick in mud for motoring.

At the fancy ball that same evening we kept up traditions in so hectic a manner that I felt a bit spent the next morning, in spite of which we determined to make an expedition to see the ruins of Babylon Babylon that was ancient even in the days of Abraham and "Babylon, the Glory of Nations, the beauty of the Chaldean excellency."

At 10.30 in the morning a party of us started from Baghdad.

Our mode of locomotion was a sort of glorified trolly. This was by far the quickest means of getting to our destination; had we taken the train to Hillah (which passes Babylon) our progress would have been even slower.

According to rules and regulations we were due to arrive in two hours' time (optimistic friends having assured us we should do so), but never were they more mistaken. Allowing for continual breakdowns and delays, four hours was nearer the mark; so that by the time we reached our destination it was distinctly warm.

The sun blazed red and relentless over the great plain, in the middle of which lay the mighty city of Babylon.

Centuries ago the glistening hosts of Assyrians must have marched over it led by their King Sennacherib.

No doubt from the city walls and from the watch towers the inhabitants had seen their gleaming cohorts flashing with gold and silver, had heard the challenge of

the trumpets, and the thud of their horsemen charging across the plain, " for the King had breathed vengeance on a people that had dared to rise in rebellion against him, vowing to lay the proud palaces and gardens of Babylon to the dust."

In so relentless a manner did he keep his word that it wrung those words of lament from Isaiah : " Babylon is fallen, is fallen ; and all the graven images of her gods He hath broken unto the ground."

On all sides we saw ruined walls, the foundations and the basements of buildings, with here and there great mounds of earth thrown up. Doubtless the result of excavations which had mostly been carried out by the Germans before the War.

But gone now were the marble colonnades, the temples to " Bel," " Merodach " and " Ishtar," the columns and arches inlaid with jade and alabaster.

Men had desecrated the altars of Babylon and had gradually stolen fragments from the symmetry of her palaces.

Many of the burnt bricks glazed with rich enamel, which had adorned the monuments, were from time to time ruthlessly dug up, and taken to Baghdad, either to build palaces for the Caliphs, or in later years to erect houses for wealthy Pashas. Assyrians, Persians, Arabs, all had helped to fritter away little bits of her former beauty and glory.

When Nebuchadnezzar, however, rose to power he rebuilt the city with splendour and magnificence.

" One reads of palaces whose cornices were decorated with bronze, and sometimes those of the more wealthy Babylonians with burnished gold—of mighty Temples to the gods, whose gates were of solid brass—and of hanging gardens, orchards and groves of date palms " (these latter being the emblem of fertility and life).

The land in many places was irrigated by broad canals, by the side of which were shady plantations, and here, no doubt, the crowds assembled in the cool of the evening enjoying the air beneath the shade.

In Babylon the people gave their lives to the joy of living :

" The luxury of the capital surpassed all conception, and its worship of pleasure was greater perhaps than the world had ever seen," for had not this mighty city been the mother of civilization nigh on four thousand years ? and was it not the " Gate of the Gods ? " . . .

There is still to be seen the remains of the great Processional way down which Nebuchadnezzar passed to the temple of " Ishtar," a road which must have been exceptionally wide, for we are told chariots were driven sometimes four and five abreast between the great sculptured bulls and griffins which lined the route. It leads eventually to the sacred temple and passes again under the walls of the palace itself.

Further on are the ruins of the Hall of Audience, where Belshazzar held his great feast. " The grand hall (according to Dr. Wigram) measures about 200 feet by 80, and is as large as the nave of a cathedral. One can still trace opposite the doorway the apse that was the site of the Throne."

I closed my eyes and tried to picture to myself the Great Hall filled with revellers. In imagination I saw once more the walls and floors adorned with rich carpets from India and Persia. . . . Great torches flared in iron tripods, and the air seemed heavy with perfume. I saw again the magicians—the astrologers—the dancing girls grouped around luxurious couches on which the guests reclined. At the far end of the chamber on a raised dais was a Throne of Ivory upon which sat Belshazzar the King !

Then the words of the Bible came to me. . . . "For Belshazzar the King made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand . . . and Belshazzar whiles he tasted the wine . . . commanded that they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem . . . and they drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

That night there was feasting and laughter and song in the great hall.

The wine-bearers filled the cups to overflowing, the dancing girls clashed their cymbals, the banquet was at its height, when—suddenly—there fell a strange hush on the revels. . . . "And in the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the King's palace, and the King saw the part of the hand that wrote" . . . words pregnant with meaning . . ."Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting!" . . .

To the north of the palace and a little further on is a deep dry moat. This is supposed to be the den of lions into which Daniel was thrown by King Darius. And I believe there is good authority for considering the fact authentic.

The river, too, could tell us many tales.

Here the Children of Israel sat by the waters of Babylon and wept, hanging their harps upon the willows.

"It was here that her sons and daughters chanted the hymns of their ancient faith as they tended their flocks by the still waters, or sat in groups apart whispering of the days when Israel should again be free, her yoke of bondage broken!"

Later under the ruined walls of Babylon we spread our baskets for lunch and tried to remember all we could

f its wonderful history. Had time permitted, we should .ke to have visited the Tower of Babel, which lay fifteen niles to the south, but it was too far, and so reluctantly ve mounted our trolly and set our faces once more owards Baghdad.

CHAPTER XXIX

AN ASSYRIAN WEDDING AND THE DEATH OF THE PATRIARCH

THAT winter we had many visitors to our camp—amongst others the Papal Delegate, Monsignor Smets, and later the Bishop of Nagpore and Mrs. Chatterton, who were touring through Mesopotamia—the latter, I think, was a born traveller and enjoyed everything in spite of discomforts.

Personally I was always delighted to see people and to offer what hospitality I could under the circumstances, and F., whose heart was in his work, enjoyed taking them round the camp and pointing out the various industries we had started.

In Baghdad I verily believe we were considered one of the "sights" of the country, and bracketed (for tourists) with Babylon, Nineveh and other interesting localities! Most people passing through Baghdad were sent out eventually to see the Colony. Certainly the fact that forty-five thousand refugees (the remnants of two Christian nations) were all under canvas in the desert and living at peace, was unique in itself.

But besides high dignitaries of the churches, we also had the Navy interested in our wild people. At that time the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indian Squadron (Admiral Tothill) was inspecting in the Persian Gulf and made a flying visit to Baghdad to see the country. He came out to our camp with all his staff, and for the

time being my little shanty looked gay and festive with much gold lace and aiguillettes !

F. had now a big scheme on foot. Nothing less than the repatriation of the entire Assyrian nation back to their own land. This lay in the hilly country, north of Mosul, stretching eastwards to Urmia.

It was a tremendous undertaking and fraught with pitfalls and difficulties.

The Assyrians themselves were divided into two factions who were antagonistic in many ways towards one another. To reconcile these parties and make them a homogeneous nation was the task F. was endeavouring to accomplish.

Surma Khanoum (the Patriarch's sister) had just gone on a mission to England to plead for her countrymen, the Patriarch himself being too ill at the time. "Surma," although fêted everywhere in London and for the moment made much of in all influential circles, got nothing practical or definite from her visit, and sadly we realized the fact that generally speaking it was a failure. In the meantime something had to be done.

The Refugees were costing the British Government no less than fifteen lakhs of rupees a month, and F. foresaw, with all his efforts for economy, that unless the Assyrians could be got back to their own land they would be a continual drain on the British taxpayer at Home.

It was at this psychological moment that an Assyrian named Agha Petros came forward. He was by origin a mountaineer from the Baz country, and rather a mysterious personage. In many ways he was hostile to any temporal power being given to the Patriarch. However, he proposed a scheme which it was thought might possibly reconcile the two factions if, for the time at any rate, they could be induced to drop party feelings

and unite to regain their former territory, thus forming a combined Assyrian nation.

F., in consultation with Sir Arnold Wilson (the then Civil Commissioner) and the military authorities, decided to give Agha Petros a chance, supplying him at the same time with rifles and ammunition equivalent to the amount the Assyrians had brought with them to Baqubah before they had been disarmed.

Thus the great adventure began.

The scheme was only mooted in March, and by the following April the exodus had begun—six thousand scallywags were gradually mustered and armed, and as a preliminary measure had started going up to Mosul with their families.

In the meantime there had been changes in the G.H.Q. at Baghdad. Sir George MacMunn had left Mesopotamia, and a month later Lieut.-General Sir Aylmer Haldane (whom F. had formerly known at the War Office) came out from England to succeed him.

Though at the moment the political situation was fairly quiet, still the Arabs, like the Irish, were always "spoiling for a fight."

In agreement with the French, we had withdrawn our frontier from Der-es-Zor down the Euphrates, and owing to this circumstance a certain amount of encouragement may have been given them. Be that as it may, the fact remains that very early in the spring an attack was made by the Arabs on Tell-Afar, a small town on the desert side of the Mosul Vilayet, when a Political officer and a B.O.R. were killed.

A punitive party was at once dispatched to Mosul and the rising squashed; but the Arabs were simmering, and once again an attempt was made by the insurgents on the railway line between Baghdad and Mosul. These sorts of pin-pricks went on intermittently for some time

and were suppressed by our troops. But the signs and portents were that we should soon have more serious trouble with the Arabs.

Nevertheless, life went on very much the same. Nobody seemed to bother their heads about matters becoming serious. Sir Arnold Wilson was, perhaps, most alive to the seriousness of the situation, but he found it hard to make others realize the trend of events.

Baghdad was now full of the wives of officers and men, the War Office having given them permission to join their husbands.

Far from the madding crowd, at Baqubah we lived our patriarchal life surrounded by our flocks and herds. At times I began to picture F. as Moses waiting to lead the people back to their promised land.

Amongst the refugees there were the usual events incidental to a large community, that is, births, deaths, and much marrying and giving in marriage.

An Assyrian wedding is a very tedious and long affair, the engagement ceremony generally lasting a week. It consists of dancing and feasting.

The men, armed with rifles, commence by bombarding the bridegroom's dwelling. They proceed to fire off endless volleys, until any ordinary bridegroom would be nearly demented; not so the Assyrian, who revels in a noise.

They then enter the house and continue to feast and dance and sing until midnight. This, no doubt, by way of heartening him up still further.

At the bride's house there is also much feasting, the merry-making being kept up for three days.

These entertainments are given by the Qariva or best man (really the literal translation is god-father), and by the Qarouta (god-mother of the bride), both of these taking their turn in the celebrations; meanwhile each

side endeavours to outrival the other with regard to feasting.

Having fed too well, and not always too wisely, they hope to receive the supreme word of praise, "*Besma-Ganukh*" (well done, bravo !) a word only used on very rare occasions. The ceremony then ended with the grand finale of breaking a chimney for luck at the moment in which the bride was conducted to her husband's house. This feat was not, however, possible for dwellers in tents, so the mother of the bride usually tried to win fortune for her daughter by plying her guests yet more liberally with good things, after which the young couple were pronounced firmly united.

About this time a sad event happened in the camp, namely, the death of the Patriarch. He was quite a young man, but unhappily for some months had been in a rapid decline.

All his people mourned him sincerely, and by way of showing their grief placed little black flags over their tents.

In the desert this had a novel and striking effect.

Imagine hundreds and hundreds of sombre black flags fluttering in the breeze against a vivid blue sky, the yellow sand throwing up the whiteness of the tents and forming an effective background to the picture.

CHAPTER XXX

A SECOND TRIP TO THE PERSIAN HILLS—THE BEGINNING OF RUMOURS OF WAR

WHEN the heat in Baghdad became too oppressive, General Haldane and his staff moved to Surmil, a native village below Karind, with natural facilities in the way of water and shade for camping. Karind had now been made a big summer rest camp for troops. It was here most of the wives and children of the officers and men stationed in the country were sent during the great heat of Mesopotamia.

F. at this time was so frequently away and so fully occupied with the Great Adventure of Repatriation that I also flitted northwards and once more to Kermanshah, there to revel in bluer skies and cooler breezes.

This year a Persian Prince, Ameer-I-Khul by name, had given up his house for the use of the British, and Percoms was running it as a sort of hotel for the wives of officers from Iraq, with an N.C.O. in charge of the catering.

To my mind its great attraction was the shady garden of poplars and the running water.

The mansion, I believe, was built originally for the Prince's harem, but as the ladies' apartments were not sufficiently commodious to accommodate everyone, tents were pitched in the garden for the overflow—it was a tight fit—sardines had roomy quarters compared

with us! Much to my relief, after a few days of unutterable heat and sandflies in a tent, I was given a room in the harem part of the house, at the back of which a little gurgling stream ran under a high wall surrounding the building. Beneath its shadow Aarsnic placed my bed at night, so that I was almost entirely cut off from everyone.

The house was rich in Persian carpets, and that apparently was all the furniture, but the Ordnance stores from Baghdad nobly stepped in and supplied other necessary articles.

I know the competition for looking-glasses was fast and furious.

We were well done on the whole, considering the dearth of furniture in Mespots combined with the difficulty of transport. Save in the one small matter of curtains we had nothing to complain of.

In the bazaar I invested in some inexpensive but quite pretty pink ones. I remember as a child always having a partiality for a pink bedroom. Often on waking to cold grey skies outside, I would lie in bed and weave fancies of sunny lands and glorious sunrises, which the pink curtains veiled. Pleased with my purchase, I handed them over to the sergeant in charge who had kindly offered to hang them for me. While he was doing so, I inquired how he liked my purchase. From the top of the ladder (an unfair post of vantage) he regarded me with a cold grey eye and remarked: "Madam—pink curtains (my missus tells me) are the last resort of an old maid!" Surprised, I looked up distinctly thrilled—but the questions froze upon my lips, for the austerity of his gaze baffled me. After this somewhat dark saying Mr. Sergeant tucked a mouthful of tin-tacks into his cheek and refused to expound further on what might have been an illuminating subject.

But even pink curtains could be drawn aside, and then the view from my window like a little silhouette of heaven filled my soul with joy. Framed in the great arches of the long veranda which ran the length of the house I saw the Persian Hills—"Hills," as Sir Frederick Treves charmingly describes in one of his books, "that are sensitive, sympathetic and full of changing moods—that have in them an infinite variety of colour."

There were mornings when they were rosy and luminous and flecked with opal tints, and evenings when they were as blue as the heart of a sapphire and tinged with lilac and lemon; but I think I loved them best at night, those nights when the moon hung high in the heavens, and rained over them a shower of silver moonshine. Sometimes flocks of little white clouds like frightened doves would chase one another across the darkling velvet of their summits, and night would lie hushed and silent under a spangle of diamond stars.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN A PERSIAN GARDEN

(With apologies to Rudyard Kipling.)

If you can live for months when all around you
There's gossip rife—and people talk of you,
If you can smile at all their petty scandal
Yet make allowance for their weakness too,
If you can be a friend tho' friends malign you,
Nor stoop to quarrel tho' they give you blame,
If you can meet them with a fearless candour
And keep your head—and treat them just the same !—

If you can live your life serene and cheerful
When jarring strife and petty quarrels rise,
Too big for " Tattle " and too kind for scorning
(" And yet don't look too good, or talk too wise ! "),
If with a word of sarcasm you could rend them
Yet you withhold it for a kindly smile,
Thus turning venom into something sweeter—
Ah ! then, dear Friend, your life will be " worth while."

WE were a regular " hen convention " in the hotel, mostly all grass widows, with husbands stewing in the heat of the plains; one or two belated ones came up for short leave, but they were few and far between and seldom stayed more than a week at the outside.

I suppose, human nature being as it is, gossip was unavoidable; but alas, later, scandal and tittle-tattle came creepin' in.

How small we get in a little place when time lies

idly on our hands—it fills one with surprise and wonder after all the big and vital things we have hit up against during the War. Somehow one hoped Life's outlook could never descend to the petty again—but it does, and that's *that* " all the same as formerly."

Kermanshah,which only one short year ago had looked with friendly eyes on all alike, now became somewhat of a hornet's nest. 'At least Ameer-I-Khul's harem quarters did.

It all began by Mrs. X. and Mrs. Z. having tents side by side. Mrs. X. was fair, frivolous and fascinating. Mrs. Z. was staid, somewhat severe and rigid in outlook—The result was obvious, neither side was discreet; scandal spread and the hotel took sides.

Under the shady trees in little knots they sat recounting tales many and passing strange about one another.

Our Persian garden was spoilt—for Nature is sensitive and sympathetic to the atmosphere of men-folk . . . the poplars whispered scandal to the winds—the winds bore it into the town—the little rivulets gurgled with merriment: they had listened to the self-same tales from Persian ladies. East and West—what difference was there between them? and they rippled with laughter as they too wended their way overflowing with gossip into the City. . . .

I shall be 'normously glad to be out of it I thought, and murdered Kipling as a vent to my feelings! At times I felt inclined to wire to F.: " Please come and take me over as soon as possible—I want to be returned to store badly! "

I was beginning to have a terrible " home-thirst," and the very word Baqubah made me want to take " little box and bundle " and start back . . . I wanted to breathe the pure air of the desert . . . I wanted to

see the rows of white tents . . . I wanted to see—well—a certain Director of Repatriation struggling along in the heat with a riotous crowd of scallywags.

Still the skies were blue and the mountains rosy, and there were moonlight picnics and high jinks, roof parties and dances; but in spite of all there was an undercurrent of unrest and anxiety—" a nasty fighting flavour creepin' into our daily lives," and mostly now from the world outside.

Rumour reached us from the north of the Bolshevists threatening Teheran.

Sir Arnold Wilson was getting desperate in Iraq.

General Haldane and his staff hurriedly left Surmil and returned to Baghdad.

The Arabs had risen, leave was stopped, the railway was attacked between Quaritu and Baqubah; and we were cut off from all communication with Mesopotamia save by aeroplane . . . and this, as someone wittily remarked, is peace!—the peace that passeth understanding.

Things now began to look rather serious.

The Arabs were in revolt on the lower Euphrates and Sammara was encircled by the enemy.

Colonel Hay, who was then commanding at Sammara, could get no message through to his wife in Kermanshah, though later he was able to do so. From the lower Euphrates the trouble spread to Hillar on the upper reaches of the river. Here most of our troops were engaged in very severe fighting. The situation was now rapidly getting extremely grave.

The Mosul and Shergat line was once more attacked, and disaffection spread to the eastern side beyond Baqubah.

At Sharaban the Irrigation Officer (Mr. Buchanan) was killed by the Arabs under the most tragic circumstances, and that before the eyes of his wife: the latter

after undergoing untold hardships was eventually hidden in a friendly sheikh's harem until such time as it was safe to conduct her to Baghdad. Mrs. Buchanan in her book retails fully the harrowing details of those nightmare days.

The enemy now advanced towards Baqubah, at the same time threatening Baghdad, and then practically the whole country was blazing and in revolt. Only the Tigris line reaching from Baghdad to Basrah was quiet.

CHAPTER XXXII

AN ARAB RISING—COMMUNICATIONS CUT WITH IRAQ

AT Kermanshah rumours kept coming through, but we heard very little authentic news, and no personal communications were received by the majority of us.

The aeroplanes were far too occupied carrying military dispatches to worry about our letters.

Mrs. Young, whose husband was commanding a column at Baghdad, assured me repeatedly Baqubah was quite safe. With that I tried to be content, but I had a dim inward sense of apprehension, which was not lightened by Samuel and Aarsnic. All the gossip and blood-curdling tales of the bazaar they imbibed as a sponge absorbs moisture. Samuel had a morbid joy in giving me cheery little bits of news, such as "Baqubah Camp was devastated!"—"The refugees were in full flight."—"F. was a prisoner in the hands of the Arabs!" . . . "Samuel," I would say, "there's a good old English proverb, 'No news is good news'"—but somehow it didn't seem to work out, leastways not with Samuel. His breast would slowly heave with suppressed emotion, and then he'd burst into tears, while Aarsnic would turn on me a dewy eye, throw her apron over her head and sob loudly.

Both were firmly convinced their respective families

had been massacred; their nerves had completely gone to pieces—and no wonder, for the memory of former horrors must still have been very fresh.

However, both my retainers had a touching and childlike trust in my superior powers of obtaining information (how I don't know), and I found the fact of singing gaily as I dressed in the morning had a calming effect on both of them. "All must be well," they whispered, "if the Khanoum sings!" But I didn't feel like "Sunny Jim!"

Meanwhile, the Bolshevists were giving a great deal of trouble to those of us in the land of "the Lion and the Sun," and amongst the Persians in Teheran there was some panic—indeed, a great many had "cold feet," and began to sell their valuable carpets at ridiculous prices rather than have to part with them later by force to the Bolshevists.

Officers coming through Kermanshah exhibited to our envious eyes many priceless treasures, at the same time informing us that the roads in certain places were mined in case the enemy should advance further south, but whether this was true or not I do not know, for we were continually hearing contradictory versions of exciting news. Be that as it may, for the moment the one thing *certain* in Life's uncertainty was the fact that we were fixtures in Kermanshah and could neither move northwards nor southwards, for the Arabs were distinctly making themselves objectionable round about the railhead at Quaritu. . . . Now we began to feel rather like prisoners in a beleaguered city!

At this time I believe the newspapers at Home were full of startling headlines:

"Women and Children in Danger at Karind!
"Cut Off from all Help," etc., etc.

Certainly there was danger, but there was much exaggeration, for the camp was well protected and well organized. Everyone had clear orders given them where to assemble should any disturbance arise from Khurds or other hostile tribes in the vicinity.

I do not think, however, there was much panic, at least amongst the officers' wives. From one I received a letter mentioning casually that her particular rendezvous was about a mile away, and hopefully adding: "If the alarm happens at night, thank God I've a pink *crêpe-de-Chine* nightie!—a positive 'necess.' these lawless times!!"

During the course of the next few weeks Major Daly, the Political officer from Hillah, flew over by aeroplane. At that time his wife and children were safely in Kermanshah. He had many tales to tell us, and amongst others that the Assyrians were being moved to Baghdad and the Armenians sent to Constantinople.

To me it sounded a perfectly incredible story, but still I was in the dark, for no news had come to me from F. I had spent untold gold in wires, which were difficult to get through, having to be sent round by Karachi, and it was a toss-up whether they ever reached their destination.

Major Daly also told us that orders had come from England—indeed, ships were already chartered—to transport all women and children out of the country the following October; in fact, the moment it was considered safe for them to be convoyed down the line.

All these scraps of information, true and false, kept us continually on the *qui vive*. It was tantalizing and demoralizing. But so fast and furious did the wheel of existence turn that, notwithstanding we were in the throes of war, dinners, dances and picnics continued in spite of everything. Perhaps, on the whole, it was

better that our minds should be turned from immediate anxiety, though, somehow, it seemed rather like Nero's fiddling while Rome was burning!

There was no doubt that in Baghdad G.H.Q. was getting more than a "teeny" bit nervous, and our menfolk were having anything but an easy time on the upper Euphrates.

News had just reached us that a whole company of the Manchester regiment had been captured at Hillah. It seemed unthinkable—our gallant young Tommy-lads, many not long out from Home, prisoners in the hands of the Arabs, who were past masters in refined torture. The thought was awful; it cast a shadow over us all. Merely the bare fact of the disaster had reached us. The lack of details must have been terrible for their wives in Karind. One thought with sympathy of the anguish of those women, waiting through long, long weeks of suspense, torn with anxiety for news—for names—for letters—which *never* came.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ARAB ATTACKS—BAGHDAD IN DANGER

THE day immediately following these tidings an officer who happened to have been at Karind informed me that at the post office he had seen a letter addressed to me, evidently left by aerial post. The date, he imagined, was some weeks old. This was an example of the uncertainty of our letters during those days of stress and turmoil.

Seeing my anxiety for news, he nobly motored back to Karind and fetched the letter for me. It was, of course, a long-delayed one from F., in which he tried to allay my fears, but I could read between the lines that they were in a very serious position—the Arabs continually shooting into the camp, and, alas! I knew only too well how short the refugees were of ammunition. . . . After all, Samuel's bazaar rumours were not entirely without foundation. To me it was always a mystery how news travels in the East without telegraphs, without letters, or any known mode of communication.

Mrs. Young had also had a letter from her husband, whose column had been sent to conduct operations across the river near Baqubah. I found Mrs. Young very upset at news she had evidently just received. This distressed me—but about conditions at the refugee camp naturally she knew very little.

It was not until many weeks later, after I had returned safely to Baghdad, that I heard the true story—and this from both Political officers and men alike who were actually in the camp at the time. From F. I heard very little while at Kermanshah. I give the facts as they were related to me, and I do not think this version has ever been published.

* * * * * *

The advent of Young's column was a dramatic moment, consisting as it did of both British and Indian troops of all arms with masses of impedimenta. They were originally directed to Baqubah town station, the opposite side of the river, but finding the place threatened by the insurgents and with little facilities for derailment, they decided to come on to the Refugee Siding, where F. had specially constructed ramps* for the movement of repatriation. Incidentally, it is problematical what this column would have done otherwise.

At a very unearthly hour in the morning F. was hastily summoned to help with the detrainment of the column and to assist with transport and working parties, etc.

On arrival at the siding, he found the General whiling away the time munching sandwiches, and naturally anxious to get the troops on the move as early as possible. This was no easy matter, and it took all their energies in Baqubah to do so. After some hours of hard work it was eventually accomplished.

Our camp was then alive and bristling with troops, horses, guns, mules and ammunition-carts covering its whole area and reaching to Baqubah town.

Rather a humorous side to this picture (though

* A sloping plane for derailment.

quite unconscious of humour) was the fact of a wire to F. only the day before, intimating the arrival of the column and asking him to have soda water and ice in readiness for the troops! This was a quaint example of the mentality of G.H.Q. and the acme of satire had they but known!

Our soda-water plant could about supply one man and a boy! And as for ice—well, it was as plentiful as in the Sahara. But there, the "necessities" of Baghdad were "luxuries" to Baqubah!

The next tragic and dramatic moment was two days later when the column returned—this time unfortunately moving back expeditiously to Baghdad, with, alas! a large portion of their impedimenta left derelict in the desert, or, worse still, in the hands of the Arabs.

It appears that General Young's column had pushed a detachment out of Baqubah, which, sad to relate, was attacked in the darkness, with the result there was some confusion and the animals stampeded both transport and gun mules.

The attack, however, was quickly beaten off, but the detachment, comprising the 94th Russell's Infantry and other troops, had to retire, with the loss of some casualties, one or two machine and mountain guns and a certain amount of transport.

Before leaving, General Young briefly informed F. that the Arabs were coming into Baqubah and that F. would have to take care of himself as best he could (with what means Heaven only knew, as the refugees were desperately short of armament and ammunition).

It was a gloomy prospect.

The feelings of both F. and his staff may, perhaps, be more imagined than described as they watched the long line of troops wending their way across the desert. The solitary figure of the General leading (followed

by his Lancer orderly), and accompanied by Horse Artillery, Dragoon Guards, Rifle Brigade, Indian Troops, all hastily retiring to Baghdad by order of the Commander-in-Chief, and leaving 35,000 men, women, and children practically unarmed.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ATTACK ON BAQUBAH CAMP

AFTER this things became very serious.

The departure of the column left the Political officers in Baqubah in a desperate position, and it was the immediate signal for the Arabs to enter the town, which they did, pillaging the Treasury and ransacking the Political offices.

There was now considerable fighting in the streets, and Major Hyles, with the rest of his staff, had to keep the insurgents practically at bay while retiring across Marshall's Bridge. Here a small detachment of native infantry had been left behind to guard the railway. Once safely across the bridge, they were not far from the Refugee Camp, to which they fled for safety; utterly exhausted, they entered the place, and never was "Johnnie Walker" more appreciated.

F. plied them with drinks all round, and advised them to go to the hospital to rest and recoup. . . .

Now began a time of stress and storm for everyone in the camp.

F. considered the position rapidly—it was rather desperate.

Meanwhile no word had come from Baghdad as to how he was to defend the camp or with what means.

The camp perimeter was some seven miles in extent.

There were no trained men and only a handful of

modern rifles, with ten rounds of ammunition per man! the remaining armament being Winchesters of sixty-five years old, all of whose ammunition was defective.

Moreover, a large part of the camp, including the hospital and animal lines, was within close rifle range of the opposite bank of the river. Here the Arabs had cleverly concealed a Maxim gun (captured from our troops), and from behind date palms and plantations were peppering the hospital, keeping up a continual din of hoarse shouts and yelling defiance against the Christians.

The bullets went on whizzing all that live-long day, and for another, and yet another, till presently the camp came under a continual sustained rifle fire from the whole length of the river bank, causing many casualties in the closely packed hospitals and tents.

This continued practically without cessation for seventy-two solid hours.

The Assyrians returned the fire with interest, killing and wounding many of the enemy, but the difficulty was to curb their zeal and prevent them from firing away all their ammunition. From time to time mounted parties of Arabs endeavoured to cross the river at all points and were driven back.

During all those weary hours F. never relaxed and never despaired; for three days he hardly slept.

My brave little "Pomegranate" never failed him. Regularly morning and evening she came down from her tent to make his bed—sometimes crouching behind mounds of sand for shelter, so as to dodge the bullets which were continually flying over our house. But save to wash and snatch an hour's rest when possible, F. never slept. He knew that if the Arabs made up their minds to attack *en masse* the refugees would be utterly out-

numbered. One side also of the camp was open desert and hard to protect adequately.

There was no alternative ; women and children could not fall into the hands of the Arabs while there were British soldiers in the camp (with or without ammunition) ; they must make their stand. By ceaseless working, F. got some defences thrown up at the most exposed parts, digging trenches and covering the fronts with barbed wire. He then organized the best men to defend certain sections, keeping a main reserve close at hand day and night, which he himself directed to threatened points ; also to prevent waste of ammunition he personally served it out round by round.

The Assyrians, who were all brave men, were willing and glad to come to close quarters if necessary with the enemy, and many gallant things were done by them and the Armenians.

In the camp at this time was the wife of the Political officer at Deltawah, whose husband, Capt. Lloyd, while out in the district, had been captured by the Arabs. Capt. Lloyd had somehow managed to scribble a few lines to his wife, advising her to pack up any valuables she possessed without arousing suspicion, to order the car, and to pretend she was going for a week-end visit to Baqubah. This she was able to do, and arrived safely at the latter place only to find it in the hands of the Arabs. She then ordered the chauffeur to drive as fast as possible to the Refugee Camp. Meanwhile no one knew where Capt. Lloyd was concealed at the moment, and naturally all, including his wife, were anxious to find out. One of the Assyrians volunteered to try and get information. The man had been much with the Arabs and spoke Arabic fluently ; so, disguising himself as a Mohammedan, F. gave him permission to go.

Three days later he came back with the glad tidings

that Capt. Lloyd was safe in the house of a friendly Sheikh. This was the first intimation they had in Baghdad of his safety. . . .

At the Wireless station by the Diyala railway bridge there was a small detachment of Indian Infantry under a British officer.

This also was now attacked by the Arabs with considerable vigour. Shots began to fall uncomfortably near to the Head-quarter office, and reaching to my little house, both of which came in for a good deal of peppering.

The din, I was told, in this quarter was perfectly deafening. After thirty-six hours of purgatory, the situation became almost intolerable; in fact, so much so that several of the Political officers felt it was impossible to "carry on," and even one or two of F.'s staff pressed him very severely as to whether he took a sufficiently serious view of the situation, at the same time urging him to send immediate messages into Baghdad for succour.

It was a hard moment for F., for he fully realized their point of view, but he answered simply: "The women and children had to be defended at all costs."

Baghdad, he knew, was in a very critical position; if possible, he did not want to embarrass them further by alarming messages, or depleting them of troops which they could ill spare.

There was much, however, I think, to be said on our side, for when one considered the position it was no wonder many thought it a forlorn hope. Here they were, surrounded on all sides by hostile Arabs, 35,000 souls out in the desert utterly alone, of whom the majority were helpless women, children, and sick, and with only ten rounds of ammunition a man. It seemed inevitable they would all be massacred unless help came quickly. Meanwhile, with a heart full of anxiety, F. was trying to

get a message through to Baghdad for arms and ammunition.—Hours of suspense passed.—No reply came—the line was being continually cut.—At last, when he had almost given up hope, the welcome news was received, " Rifles and ammunition coming out ! "

While awaiting the arrival of this consignment an aeroplane was seen flying over the camp.

This caused great excitement amongst the refugees.

At the moment F. was absent from Head-quarters inspecting the defences. On his return, several hours later, he was extremely surprised to find one of his officers had laid out S.O.S. signals of despair for the aeroplane's observation—only showing how desperate the condition of affairs was considered by many at that time.

The plane was, however, obliged to come down, and F. at once took the opportunity of explaining to the pilot that the message was quite unauthorized. All he required was more arms and ammunition, and he would guarantee to stop the Arabs all along the line.

CHAPTER XXXV

A FORLORN HOPE

AND so another dawn broke over the desert—another night passed of sleepless anxiety for all in camp. The sky turned pink, and the August sun rose fierce and cruel.

Still the Arabs continued desultory firing on the hospitals from across the river.

But the hope of ammunition kept up drooping spirits, and by mid-afternoon that day a train with arms and ammunition managed to get through to within five miles of the camp.

Here, alas! it was derailed by the Arabs.

Hastily gathering together his mounted men (only too eager to come to close quarters with the enemy), F. sent them off under the command of Capt. Clarke, and very soon the insurgents were flying in all directions, the Assyrians chasing them with shouts of delight, after which working parties were sent out and the ammunition brought in, amid great rejoicings and triumph!

Now the time had come for which F. had impatiently waited; now at last he was able to redeem his promise, and to show what the refugees could do.

Permission was given, and parties were organized to scour the country round. To the Assyrians, fierce in fight and ruthless, it was the call of the blood—they

saw red—visions of what they had suffered formerly at the hands of the Moslems spurred them on. Now they were going to pay off old scores.

Notwithstanding the fact that they were the centre of intense fire from the Arabs, who brought into use the machine guns taken from General Young's column, every village, man, or animal within a radius of eight miles of the camp was either burnt, killed, or captured. In order to show the Director of Repatriation how thoroughly they had done their duty they invented a sprightly little way all their own of convincing him.

One fine morning F. found, to his horror, neatly laid out on his office table, pairs of "ears" in rows—as a silent witness to the number of the enemy they had accounted for!

There is no doubt they put a holy fear into the Arabs, for it was credibly reported on all sides this action deterred the rebels from advancing on Baghdad.

So ended the stand of the refugees in Baqubah camp.

The following week a regiment of Sikhs arrived to defend the Wireless station, but no sooner had they made their appearance than the situation was again rendered extremely grave by the fall of Sharaban.

This at once released a considerable force of the enemy, and the Political officers gave their unanimous opinion that anything up to 40,000 Arabs might now come down on Baqubah. . . .

Troubles seemed to be heaping up, and with heavy hearts they again looked to their defences. F. began immediately to contract the size of the camp, and to get the people as far away as possible from the river, though this was no easy matter on account of the water supply. Day after day the women, in spite of the rifle fire, would surreptitiously try to steal down to the water's edge, in order to fill their brass pots for cooking, though

strictly against orders. Undaunted, too, they never failed to take food into the trenches for their men-folk, even sending their children, who were sometimes shot in doing so. In their own way they suffered and acted with heroism, these simple daughters of Eve, revealing unconsciously the marvel of human courage and endurance. . . .

Can it be that the fact of facing death hour after hour makes one callous after a time? I wonder? Or is the power of love and service greater than all else? I would fain think so.

Everyone was now put on half rations, for it was impossible to foretell when fresh stores would be procurable.

The Commanding Officer of the Sikhs and F. were more or less in agreement.

Provided they had sufficient means of defence they were prepared to cope with fairly large numbers of the enemy, without worrying Baghdad. This decision was telegraphed to the G.O.C., and now there was nothing left to do but await events. Needless to say, many following nights were spent without much sleep, for they expected every minute to hear the Arabs charging down upon them.

But each morning put an end in some measure to the strain of suspense, until they found the prophecies of the enemy's invasion had not matured.

There is no doubt the Arabs had intended coming down on the camp, but probably were too busy looting Sharaban and other localities. Amongst the Arabs, however, there is no cohesion. It is impossible to foretell what whim of the moment may divert their attention from main issues.

For this reason it is thought that an Arab army with Arab officers will never succeed.

The clouds now seemed to be rolling by. . . . Everyone got hopeful, and began to see a nice new stock of silver linings, with a respite from arduous strain.

But at this point the Military authorities in Baghdad suddenly awoke to the fact that if any serious disaster happened to the vast concourse of women and children at Baqubah camp, the repercussion in England might make " the seats of the Mighty " rather uncomfortable, and, moreover, the British public might get somewhat unpleasantly " chatty " on the subject. . . .

Hitherto, the majority in Baghdad had taken in (as a kitten laps milk) the quieting thought all was serene amongst the refugees.

I do not think it ever crept into the consciousness of G.H.Q. even a dim realization of the desperate plight the camp had been in. But apart from this, the food supply for the people was beginning to seriously embarrass the authorities, and mainly, I think, on this latter account, a bomb was hurled at F.'s head !

The order came to " evacuate the camp ! ! "

This was the last straw, and very nearly broke the camel's back !

It *was* a problem. . . . How to withdraw the refugees with the means at disposal, and with the fighting still going on, was another vast difficulty.

The idea was for the Armenians to be dispatched down to Nahruma (near Basrah), while the Assyrians were to be sent in exactly the contrary direction and to continue repatriation at Mosul.

There is a good old British proverb : " Where there's a will there's a way." The Will to work was always there with F. and his staff, but the Way they would have to find ! . . .

Ceaseless days of strain then ensued, the sick, the

old people, the children had to be moved off concurrently with the fighting men still holding their positions.

With extreme care and forethought the problem was undertaken, together with the dismantling of the camp and the salvaging of all the stores. Officers and men alike loyally supported F., never sparing themselves. Day and night these movements were carried on, with the result that the camp was miraculously evacuated by the middle of September.

Later, when to all a certain freedom from anxiety came at last . . . at last after weeks of strain . . . of hours of danger and exhausting labour . . . when some of the tumult and shouting had died down in Baghdad, what acknowledgment came of it ?

The defence of Baqubah camp was briefly dismissed in the military dispatch of the G.O.C. in the following words :

" As for the Refugees at Baqubah, they were well armed, and could look after themselves."

No one knew ! . . . No one cared ! . . .

The Arabs have a saying : " In the desert one forgets everything, one remembers nothing any more."

Let us leave it so. . . .

But the little band of scallywag refugees had justified their name for courage . . . they had helped to hold the enemy in check, and had done their bit to save Baghdad. . . .

" They had played the game."

CHAPTER XXXVI

DOWN FROM PERSIA IN A CATTLE-TRUCK

AT Kermanshah there was a considerable flutter in the "dove-cot" of Ameer-I-Khul's house.

We had just heard that the line which the Arabs had smashed up was now repaired. And from Head-quarters peremptory orders had come that all women and children connected with the Army in Persia were to be expeditiously convoyed down to Basrah, and from thence transhipped to England! There is no doubt the "Old Country" had had a nasty scare. . . . The tragedy of Mrs. Buchanan's experiences, together with other Political officers' wives, had probably opened the eyes of the British public, and the War Office, like an old hen, was clucking loudly to get her brood back and once more under her wing.

Meanwhile, in the hotel there was "a fearful weepin' and wailin' going up to Heaven!"—and it almost looked as if we should have a strike of wives!

F. had managed to get two letters through to me, in which he frantically repeated: "Do not move until I can myself come and fetch you." This looked to me rather "Bolshie" on F.'s part, but in a later epistle he carefully explained that as I was now a Political officer's wife there was no necessity for me to go down with the military contingent.

In his innermost heart I knew he had visions of suddenly hearing I had been wafted off to England

without so much as a passing word of greeting. But my number was not up for the contingent of officers' wives, and I had no wish to accompany them. It was not a particularly cheerful prospect. They were being convoyed down in batches to Baghdad and Basrah.

Meantime they were obliged to await their turn for transport at Karind Camp.

The departure of the ladies from Ameer-I-Khul's house was somewhat of an event in the annals of Kermanshah.

Our Persian garden was alive with little knots of people congregated in groups, chatting and bidding each other "good-bye," while awaiting their place in the long procession of motors which was to take them to Karind.

When the general confusion had subsided, and the string of cars had melted into a cloud of dust, I turned to bid a last farewell to our Persian garden.

How lovely it looked. The sunlight fell in patches through the branches of the poplars, their quivering leaves casting a cobweb of lace on the ground.

I could hear the water rippling softly between the sunken flower beds, where at intervals flashes of vivid colour caught my eyes, and I wished it was always blue skies and sunshine, and blossoms and birds, and all the beautiful things of life. Glancing up along the terrace the house stood silhouetted strongly in black and white, a marked contrast to the rest.

How like, I thought—and how typical of the shadow and sunshine, the black and white which had made up the sum total of our lives during those months we had crowded under its roof . . . days when we laughed lightheartedly—frivolled and danced and played with life; and days when a grey feeling fell on most of us, and we could have wept a little, amidst the laughter, with an aching feeling of sympathy for our men in Mespot.

But when all's said and done, it was a relief to turn over a clean new page, and to finish with wars and rumours of wars.

The threatening thunder-clouds which had hung over us so long, perhaps now, at last, were rolling away.

I thrilled at the thought, and with my usual optimism, numbers of silver linings floated before my mental vision.

I spent a peaceful week with kind friends at Kermanshah, for on the departure of the ladies the hotel had been dismantled, but instead of F. being able to come up and fetch me as he had anticipated, he was obliged to go to Nahruma to superintend the repatriation of the Armenians, and later to dash up to Mosul on behalf of the Assyrians.

There was no help for it, I had to arrange my own way down, and my heart sank at the thought of probably finding myself alone in Baghdad on my arrival.

It was, however, imperative that the few remaining Political officers and their families should make all speed to leave Kermanshah.

The railway would no longer be protected by block-houses after the last military convoy had gone down from Karind, and the civilians were told they would have to take what risk there was.

I arranged accordingly to travel with friends who were leaving in a few days. . . . I suppose the strain of the past months must have told on me, for I was not feeling " merry and bright " the day we started, and the long motor journey to Karind finished me.

I collapsed with fever in my tent—it was a tragic night—but, fever or no fever, the next morning early, we had to continue our journey, for the camp was being disbanded, and so, although for the time laid low, I arose from my bed and walked!

Like a dream the hours passed till we arrived at Quaritu.

Most of us get sudden shocks every now and again; mine came when I was told the train started the following day at cock-crow, and that my place was reserved in a cattle truck! "Quite comfortable," a voice cheerily remarked, passing my tent, "and plenty of ice!"

I awoke at three o'clock to a world of darkness, it felt as if it would eat one up. Outside my tent I sat limply on my little box, and felt nothing mattered any more; the heat, the sandflies, the din and hooting of motor-cars, combined with the train—which seemed to take a malicious joy in whistling and shunting—went through my head and heart like a little hammer, as well as my ears.

At intervals, every now and then a voice from out of the void would call cheerily to me: "Don't you move till the last moment . . ."

Whose the voice was I don't know to this day, but it was a kind voice and friendly, and I felt comforted.

So I sat and sat, until I imagined I was turning into a sitting hen. Presently Aarsnic's stout arm lifted me up, and with Samuel bringing up the rear I scrambled into my cattle truck, to find my stable companions were Captain and Mrs. Mosley, with whom I had travelled down. We were well protected, which was comforting, for at each end of the train was a Maxim gun, and now it was light enough to see how often it had been attacked, for the truck was pierced with many holes from rifle bullets.

With the temperature that of a fiery furnace, we spent a hot and breathless day; there were moments when, like potatoes, we seemed to be roasting "in our skins!"

Iced drinks did not long remain iced, for the sides of the iron cattle truck began to radiate heat ! . . .

But if we did indulge in sighs and groans, we generally managed to smile too, and even once or twice a courageous spirit burst into song ! . . .

The British are a wonderful race, of that there is " no possible, probable shadow of doubt. No possible doubt whatever ! "

At Table Mountain, near Baqubah, the bridge had been blown up, and not yet repaired, so out we bundled into heat and glare. In the distance was another train puffing smoke and waiting to convey us to Baghdad.

A motley crowd disgorged itself, armed with parcels, umbrellas, soda-water bottles, bedding—in fact, every sort of paraphernalia extracted hastily from our trucks and carriages.

A straggling procession then toiled wearily over the burning sand, while Arab boys buzzed round, chattering and fighting for our luggage like a swarm of black ants.

I noticed several men in long black *abbahs* silently contemplating our movements. One or two had villainous faces. I was thankful looks could not kill, for their eyes flashed with hate as we passed.

After much wear and tear and waste of tissue, I managed to secure a very dirty carriage to myself; it was second class, but I did not care. Samuel mopped it out, and thankfully I flung myself on the hard uninviting seat—and remembered nothing more ! . . .

After a time I became conscious of a voice calling me ! Of a persistent voice booming in my ears a long way off, reiterating the word " Khanoum " . . . It got louder and more imperative ! . . . " Khanoum ! " . . . " Khanoum ! " I opened my astonished eyes, to find I was lying face downwards in a nasty pool of gore, with Aarsnic bending over me and struggling to lift me up.

What had happened? . . .

I had not been attacked by Arabs? . . . for all was quiet outside.

I had not been murdered, for Aarsnic was standing smiling beside me . . . Evidently, then, I was not the heroine of a thrilling adventure . . . No! . . . nothing so romantic . . . I had simply made a fool of myself and fainted . . . It *was* humiliating.

After this, in a chastened mood, I sat on the hard seat, my head leaning wearily against the dirty shutters of the window. Everything lately had been a dream . . . the absence of F. . . . the hot, tiring journey, the nightmare of fever in the tent at Karind.

What a contrast it seemed from last year.

For then, though we had discomforts, at least we had peace . . . Oh! I thought, this little war's got an "norful" lot to answer for! . . . I pushed the crowding memories out of my head . . . I could have laughed aloud at the figure I must cut! . . . Searching my handbag for a looking-glass . . . I saw . . . "Two lovely black eyes," with a bleeding and battered nose! worthy of Carpentier himself! . . . Heavens! . . . What would F. think. Just then the train pulled up with a jerk at Baqubah station . . . It was our own little camp siding . . . the scene of so much stress and turmoil since last I'd been there . . .

Lowering the window I looked out . . . Everywhere I saw absolute desolation, nothing was left save the "flotsam and jetsam" of débris . . .

A few short months ago the camp was intact. Now our home, over which so much care and toil had been spent, was in ruins, its poor little bottle-glass windows broken . . . my garden . . . my flowers . . . All had gone.

The desert was no longer alive with thousands of

tents, women no longer sat knitting and spinning; no children rolled laughing in the sand, shouting for sheer joy of youth and happiness.

All had vanished, the little mud dwellings were roofless . . . in ruins . . . Presently, Samuel, in great excitement, came rushing up . . . He had seen Captain Clarke.

Captain Clarke, it seemed, had been left behind in charge of the Armenian police, and, to Samuel's joy, had soothed his fears. Samuel's family were safe at Mosul.

While I hesitated as to whether my vanity would allow me to see Captain Clarke, the latter strolled up to the carriage window, and then for the first time I heard all that the refugees had experienced, and the stand they had made.

Shortly after this we reached Baghdad. F. had written to say a house and servants were in readiness for me . . . but, alas, when I arrived, the servants had taken to themselves a holiday. I could find no means even to enter the house!

In despair I returned to the station. Colonel Howell, who had come to meet his wife, was still there, and with his kind help and assistance it was arranged I should go to the Civil Sisters.

Later, when night folded down over the city, with a sigh of utter contentment I slept at peace in the Nursing Home.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ACROSS THE DESERT TO MOSUL

WHEN I awoke next morning, the light was streaming through the half closed shutters, and I thought, like Joseph, I had "dreamed a dream!" For surely it was a dream, the memory of that journey from Kermanshah? . . . slowly, exhausted senses readjusted themselves, and soon my aching temples convinced me in very truth, it was no dream! . . .

There was a soft rustle of skirts outside in the passage, and my door was gently pushed open, to admit the kindest of "sisters" with a cup of delicious coffee and toast.

How good they all were to me in the Nursing Home and what a haven of peace I found it.

In those cool shaded rooms I spent ten happy days of quiet rest. F. arrived before long, and with the sight of his cheerful face and buoyant energy my grey mood vanished . . . Of course, he was shocked at my variegated appearance, and full of contrition at having been unable to fetch me.

The journey in the cattle truck filled him with indignation . . . In view of his obvious distress, I made a great effort to smile, which was heroic on my part, for it hurt horribly!

"Don't worry," I said, "except for my gorgeous colouring, I never felt better in my life!" And then we

had a good old gossip, and he told me all the news. . . . With regret I heard that Sir Arnold Wilson was leaving almost immediately . . . it meant much to F., for Sir Arnold's help and advice had never failed through all F.'s difficult time with the Repatriation Movement.

Sir Percy Cox (recently H.M. Minister in Teheran) was actually on his way out as future High Commissioner.

F. also informed me that owing to the departure of the Civil Commissioner, the repatriation of the refugees was to be suspended until actual orders from Sir P. Cox had been taken.

This was very serious, as the season was getting advanced, and there was no time to lose if the project was to be carried through—added to which, no ladies were to be allowed in Mosul, the Military authorities absolutely refusing to take any further risks with women and children in the country. This gave me food for thought. I wanted to play the game out to the end, but fate seemed to be stepping in to frustrate my doing so. There was a pause . . . then I remarked casually, " And what's to become of me ? " I asked this question of set purpose, for I knew F. had some plan simmering in his august " brain " ; he would never consent to leaving me behind . . . Lighting a cigarette, he replied with a twinkle in his eye, " I have six thousand riflemen at my disposal—that, I think, ought to be sufficient body-guard for you ? Will you risk it ? "

" Rather ! " I answered, and immediately felt like Boadicea, Zenobia, Semiramis, and all the women warriors I could think of, marching at the head of their legions. " At any rate," F. continued, " I am going down the river to meet Sir Percy Cox myself and put the matter before him."

F.'s energy was " Kolossal " (as the Germans say).

The greater the difficulties, the higher his spirits rose, he positively liked having mental mountains to surmount.

Accordingly the following day he dashed down the river, accompanied by Mr. Charge, his ever cheerful and capable A.P.O.

Sir Percy Cox was most sympathetic, and gave sanction to carry on the policy of his predecessor ; also, after some hesitation the desired permission was granted for me to accompany F. to Mosul . . . provided F. took full responsibilities and all risks.

In view of the long journey shortly before me, I thought it about time to rise from my couch and cast " idle sloth " behind me.

In the Nursing Home, to my surprise, I found no less than three other war-worn victims from round about Baqubah ; they, too, were enjoying a well-earned rest in its peaceful atmosphere.

Mrs. Buchanan had just left, but returned occasionally to visit the sisters. She looked pathetic and young in her widow's weeds. There was also Mrs. Salmon, another young widow whose husband, a Political officer, lost his life in the recent rising ; no troops were available to send to his succour, and so he, too, perished under tragic circumstances.

Major Hyles, I found a patient in one of the wards ; the strain of those days in Baqubah had told on him. Occasionally, we met and compared notes, for now I was up, " and clothed, and in my right mind," only awaiting the order to start.

All was now in readiness for our departure to Mosul. There was much shaking of heads at my rashness, and for the time being I was not popular with either sex. Those of the officers' wives who were obliged to leave Mosul felt they had a personal grievance against me ;

while with the Military themselves, plainly I was not wanted.

General Fraser, the G.O.C. at Mosul, wrote to F.: "I don't at all approve of your wife coming up here, but in the event of her doing so, I shall be delighted to put her up in my house!" . . . It was characteristic of General Fraser to temper his disapproval with charming hospitality. In spite of rather an awe-inspiring manner, there was a very kind heart under his smart tunic, and I trust later he found that as a woman I had my uses in such small matters as sewing medals on to his manly tunic and other details appropriate to my proper womanly sphere!

Of course there were the Nursing Sisters, but they were part of the Garrison; for the time being therefore, without mincing matters, I was *de trop*.

In spite of forebodings, we started gaily off to Mosul, F. and I, together with several of the Political officers and our numerous retainers.

The train only took us as far as Shergat, and then came eighty miles of sheer desert, which for the moment was not considered free from Arab raiders. F., however, had arranged everything with great care and forethought.

Mounted Assyrian patrols scoured the country for several miles in front of us, and I must confess it was a heartening sight to see our men on their useful little ponies standing sentinel at intervals along the desert track in order to guard us.

Our convoy was a bizarre and motley crowd of vehicles, motors, lorries and vanettes, all piled high with luggage and bristling with Assyrians, whose rifles pointed in all directions!

All went merry as a marriage-bell until a short distance out of Shergat Camp. Here we found two tracks—one of which we knew was the usual Convoy

route, while the other, though shorter, was less frequented and consequently not considered safe. As luck would have it, we lost our bearings, and after a while found we were evidently on the wrong road. Then the excitement began.

At full speed we tore through the desert, bumping over ruts and holes and lurching to right and left in order to avoid pitfalls; incidentally I wondered feebly if the bottom of the car (where I occasionally found myself) would not perhaps be the safest spot to remain in case of attack!

Now and again we swung past rocks and gulleys, causing everyone to be on the *qui vive* lest perchance there were Bedouins lurking behind the boulders ready to open fire on us.

I wasn't at all happy, and the next few hours furnished me with some new sensations! F., I felt, was anxious and far from pleased that we had taken the wrong track. I know the driver got it hot after we discovered our mistake! They say travel broadens the mind; it certainly broadened F.'s conversation—for the next few minutes.

Presently the figures of two Arabs suddenly became visible coming towards us through the fierce blinding sunshine.

Quick as lightning, our Assyrian orderly cocked his rifle and slued round, pointing at the Arabs, shouting in Syriac at the top of his voice! In spite of the heat, I felt as if ice were in my veins and a "fearful fear" clutched me. It all happened so rapidly, I have no distinct memory of those moments, but I have a faint recollection of F. bending forward and throwing up the man's rifle, at the same time sternly commanding him "not to fire"—this I believe only just in time, for the Assyrians have a playful way of firing first and asking

questions after! The Arabs were perfectly harmless shepherds, and if by chance one of them had been killed we should probably have had a whole tribe of Bedouins down on us in revenge.

After this incident we bumped on silently, the sun burning overhead and the blinding glare of the sand striking ruthlessly on our eyes. The ground was now a series of mounds and depressions interspersed with boulders of rocks. Here and there we met solitary horsemen whom we raced past, lest behind sandhills others might be ambushed.

Every man was on the alert and our ears were sensitive to the slightest movement. Sounds came over the desert, vague and distant, we could not tell from what direction, but we were acutely aware of the faintest noise, and each man had his rifle cocked ready for any emergency.

The desert seemed to me a sinister place, full of menace and cruelty.

Once I saw lying in a ridge of the sand and not far from our track a poor camel, apparently dying. On either side were two horrid vultures, patient and vigilant, blinking solemnly and biding their time.

With glazing eyes the lonely creature looked at us as we hurried past, making a feeble movement to rise. It was a heart-rending sight, and I longed for F. to put an end to its misery with his revolver, but we dared not stop.

Our convoy now began to get scattered: the lorry with luggage broke down and had to be repaired. As it was quite well equipped with riflemen, we thought it wisest to push on.

Suddenly F. gave an exclamation of relief and pointed to a line of white just apparent over the mounds of fluted sand. . . . They were the tents of the first Military

post at Qyarah, where a cavalry squadron was stationed, and the site of the famous oil-fields which half the world has been quarrelling about since the war !

We were now safe, and very soon we ran into the camp, and halted for a noonday rest and refreshment. The C.O.'s face when he saw the track by which we had come, and moreover safely negotiated, was a study in expressions !

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ARRIVAL AT MOSUL

The sun sends scarlet signals
 Flashing àthwart the sky,
To warn each waiting Mullah
 The hour of prayer is nigh !
Hark ! from the Min'ret a voice
 Breaks thro' the startled air
" Allah," it calls—" Yah Allah !
 Behold ! the hour of Prayer ! "

COOLING drinks were administered to us at the hospitable mess, and our motor-cars thoroughly overhauled, and then it was thought advisable to push on so as to reach Mosul before sundown. At our usual breakneck speed we continued our journey, soon leaving Qyarah out of sight though not of smell ! For the odour of its coveted oil-fields followed us for many a mile !

This time we clung to the more or less beaten track used by the Military Convoys, and no further incident broke the remainder of our journey. A little before sundown we left the sandy desert in our rear and found ourselves spinning along a good hard road which led right away to Mosul.

Now in the far distance was faintly distinguishable a green tinge over the land. Domes and minarets of mosques defined themselves, " all aglow with sunset fire " against a blue range of snow-capped hills—on the other side of which lay Khurdistan !

Arrival at Mosul

A wonderful luminosity hung over Mosul, enveloping it in an atmosphere of mystery and enchantment. Immediately in front of us, beneath a small hillock, the road changed from bright sunlight into deep violet shadow, and lay across a cornfield on our right like a folded curtain, leaving Mosul in a glow of radiance.

It struck me as a city of stately minarets proudly spearing the skies. One solitary leaning tower alone appeared out of symmetry with the others; like a broken stalk, it hung drooping over the dome of its mosque.

This minaret is held in great veneration by the people and there is a legend attached to it.

Long years ago the Prophet Mohammed is said to have visited Mosul, blessing all the mosques in turn.

As he passed, each minaret bowed in lonely obeisance to do him homage.

But the gaunt pillar of the Mosque of Jami Kibira was more humble than all the others, for with bowed head, bent, and contrite, it never raised itself again—remaining in the same position even to this day. So there it stands a monument of humility and a landmark to the inhabitants for miles round.

Gradually the light was fading, and as we approached nearer the town we began to distinguish the roofs of houses, dotted here and there, and gleaming tents.—Over the desert came the distant cries of the bazaar, mingling with the throbbing beat of "tom-toms" and the shrill barking of pariah dogs. Then floating towards us on the still air, clear and distinct, rang out the call of sunset from a mosque.

Now we were almost in the city of "Muslin" (for that is what Mosul means), and turning sharply to the right, the car pulled up with a jerk.

Planted in the middle of the road just in front of us was a mule who had chosen this unlucky moment

to take a dust-bath and, quite callous of our presence, proceeded to roll himself from side to side, kicking violently for sheer joy while sending up little clouds of sand in every direction!

By a miracle we avoided a collision—otherwise it might have been the mule's last bath, and our last drive!

"*Balak! balak!*" shouted our driver, "thou son of a dog, make way for the Effendi," but the placid owner looked on with an air more sad than hostile and made no attempt to move.

"Thou miserable flea on a sick camel, remove thy mule from under our feet, or, by Allah, I'll drive over thy rotten carcass."

. . . After many such choice expressions, accompanied by much shouting and beating of sticks, the mule was induced temporarily to forgo his bath, and we continued our perilous way along the dusty thoroughfares —no easy matter in an Eastern city, where all business is invariably carried on in the middle of the streets. On our left now flowed the ancient Tigris, and faintly across its shimmering waters we distinguished the mounds of Nineveh, with the Mosque of Nebi-Yunis (Jonah's tomb) outlined against the sky. Pausing for a few minutes to deposit superfluous luggage at F.'s quarters, we ran along by the river, past the club and the Political mess, with its gardens reaching to the water's edge—another six hundred yards brought us to our destination, and we pulled up outside the General's house, where the Union Jack was flying and a small native sentry on guard.

The noise of our approach brought an attentive A.D.C. to meet us, who conducted us through the inner courtyard. Here we found ourselves in what seemed a cool and quiet cloister around which the house was built.

In the centre of the courtyard was a delightful garden with a pergola of vines shading one side of the building, and somehow recalling visions of Italy rather than Irak. General Fraser gave me the kindest of welcomes, in spite, too, of his stern disapproval of my presence in Mosul, and then, seeing how tired I was, showed us to our rooms.

After a bath and rest we felt distinctly revived. Everything had been done for my comfort, even to the luxury of a cheval-glass—this for a bachelor establishment was unique!

To me it was an epoch-making event; such a civilized piece of furniture had not crossed my vision for at least two solid years.—With a strange uncanny sensation, I beheld again a full-length replica of myself!

The following evening, Sir Percy Cox flew up from Baghdad and dined with the General at the Divisional mess. It was a pleasant dinner in the cool cloister garden, and afterwards Sir Percy asked me if I was prepared to go over the border to Urmia should the Assyrians succeed in their Great Adventure.

The idea was that F. should be a sort of intermediary at Urmia between the Assyrians and the British Government and practically to run the State. It was not a position I was anxious for him to fill—somehow in the back of my mind was the apprehension of danger. We should have been a small, a very small nation surrounded by fierce and hostile tribes—still I was prepared to go if necessary, and frankly told the High Commissioner I would accompany F. if the movement succeeded

CHAPTER XXXIX

A SWARM OF LOCUSTS

AT the end of five days in which we enjoyed our kind host's hospitality, we moved into our new house.

I found it a palace compared to what I had been accustomed to during recent years. Like most of the dwellings in Mosul, it was built of marble. This marble is a species of crystallized limestone, soft, white and veined, but for building purposes a fraud! and for two reasons: in the winter the stone absorbs and holds moisture (this is distinctly damping to the feelings), whereas in the summer it retains the heat to such an extent, that at times I was unable to put my hand on the outer walls of the house.

There were two courtyards to my palace! An outer one, leading to an interior and still larger court in which was a *serdab** for the hot weather and a very minute but luxuriant garden.

The house was two-storied and of the usual pattern, that is, built round an inner court. The upper story had a deep wide veranda and a spacious flat roof, the latter encircled by high walls in which at intervals were small round holes big enough to hold the muzzle of a rifle, so that in case of attack it was possible from the roof to sweep the wide plain on to which the house looked.

* Underground room.

Few of the windows faced outwards, and those few were protected by strong iron bars.

To me it was for all the world as if I were living in some old border castle, far away in a lawless country.

Sometimes in the cool of the evening, I would walk on my battlements, for the view from the roof commanded a large expanse of country. What helped to keep up the delusion was the fact that the outer court was generally filled with several of our wild henchmen, lolling on benches or playing marbles, while two uncouth sentries kept guard night and day at the great ironbound door which led into my baronial hall. The key of the door was as big as a respectable walking-stick. Each evening the sentry on duty solemnly handed it over to our servitor "Samuel"; this meant the drawbridge was metaphorically drawn up, and the castle safe for the night!

Some months later (in the early spring) I remember sitting one day in my "bower" (as we called the little morning room), my handmaiden "Pomegranate" at my feet diligently sewing, when a mounted messenger arrived "hell for leather" at the postern gate!

We could hear the clatter of his horse's hoofs, and the shouts of the retainers.

Dashing down to the courtyard, I found F.'s orderly holding a steaming horse by the bridle. In his hand was a "missive" (a bit of paper) which, standing to attention and saluting, he presented to me.

Opening it, I hastily read these cryptic lines:

"Look out, the 'l.cu.ts' are coming!"

Mercy! What did it mean? F.'s writing is cuneiform to ordinary mortals, to me it is often undecipherable. This time it was beyond my poor efforts.

Once more I puzzled over the words "the 'l.cu.ts' are coming!" . . .

I stood and mused over the document, and then suddenly without warning into the midst of my broodings the orderly stepped. Planting himself in front of me, he went through a pantomime of signs to attract attention. The man, I thought, had gone stark mad! Pointing to his mouth, he champed his jaws as if dying of hunger. Poor wretch, I thought, and ordered food to be placed before him. This he refused. I was nonplussed. . . . Oh! I inwardly groaned, why could not F. have been taught in childhood to write legibly?

By this time the orderly seemed beside himself, and with a gasp I saw not only was he behaving like a demented cod-fish, opening and shutting his mouth at intervals, but that now he had begun jumping and leaping like a kangaroo—or a grasshop—. . . Heavens! . . . glory be! How dull, how dense I was. . . . Of course, I guessed what he was driving at . . . poor man . . . and poorer acting—a flash of light broke on me and the sentence stood out plain and clear:

"Look out! the *locusts* are coming!"

I was distracted . . . my first thought was for my garden! There was not a vestige of hope for it—my roses! My sweet peas! My climbing nasturtiums! All would be devoured—devastated, not a stick or leaf would remain.

In my despair I wailed helplessly to Pomegranate, who turned on me a sympathetic eye.

At that moment the "hoot" of a motor-car was heard and F. dashed in:

"Cheer up!" he called. "I think your garden may yet be saved; trenches have been dug round a certain area to localize the spread of the locusts and it is possible to save the crops." (Usually this plague of

insects fly in thick battalions, spreading devastation in their flight.)

The Arabs from long familiarity have found that by digging trenches along their route the locusts fall into them, when immediately arrangements are made to burn them.

By this means it is possible, sometimes, to minimize further damage.

The news was cheering, but notwithstanding I spent an anxious time hovering over my poor little "cabbage patch."

It had been planted and watered with so much care —we were personally acquainted with every bud; each blossom was almost a friend—to lose it now was more than I could bear. . . .

An hour passed—it seemed like two—and then, Hallelujah! the news came . . . "Locusts passed eastwards!" We had escaped!

That evening, feeling ten years younger, we climbed to our battlements, and in the glorious moonlight sat on the roof after dinner.

Down below Mosul looked like a toy city at our feet. One by one myriads of twinkling lights came out like clusters of fireflies. Sometimes moving—sometimes stationary, but always with a sparkling glow against the "royal blue of the Eastern sky." "Fetch your banjo," said F., "and let's serenade the garden by moonlight." . . . I looked down into the quiet courtyard where my flowers lay sleeping, their petals folded, and I laughed for sheer contentment.

"What odious things locusts are!" I said, "and how could John the Baptist have found them dainty morsels —as the Bible tells us?"

Oh ! it's hard to be believ'n
'You were ever luscious eat'n
Tho' John the Baptist found you very toothsome, so they say !
Still I think his poor digestion
Must have suffered some congestion,
For a locust in the in'ards has a devastating way !
So *that's* why John took honey
Just to lubricate his " tummy,"
And for fear his " Little Mary " might turn " Bolshie " so they say !

" Bravo ! " said F. " Another verse ! " But I could no more, my muse was mute. I bowed and retired to bed. . . . The gods had been kind to me and spared my little cabbage patch ! !

CHAPTER XL

ON THE ROAD TO URMIA

MUCH water, however, flowed beneath Mosul bridge before that Spring with its advent of locusts.

The Assyrian adventure was now almost ripe for fulfilment. It was most imperative the men should start their march to Urmia before the winter snows came down, making the land impassable. The refugees were encamped about twenty-five miles out of Mosul, together with their wives and families, at a place called Mindan. Situated in a valley surrounded by hills and with a river wandering through it, nothing could have been more ideal for a camp.

F. had arranged a still more forward camp for a sort of jumping-off point near to Akra, this being some twenty-five miles further east, towards Urmia. Here were assembled all the fighting men, with transport and with reserve food for three months, in instant readiness for orders to advance. It was no easy matter with such large numbers of armed men in comparative idleness to keep them from causing trouble with local authorities, added to which the camp was itself attacked by the Surchi Khurds, a tribe who were hostile to the Christians and also to the British Administration. This was practically putting a lighted match to a haystack! And the Assyrians, like dogs straining at the leash, broke loose and very soon scoured the country, dealing most success-

fully with the Khurds, chasing them back again to their villages and capturing large quantities of cattle.

F. was continually on the trek these days between Basrah, Baghdad and Mosul, arranging for the Armenians at the base, and dashing up the line again to keep the Assyrians up to the mark.

Agha Petros was of little help to him, on the contrary he was extremely dilatory in his movements, and, like most Easterns, wanted the spur occasionally.

Sometimes he used to come and visit me. A man of medium size, with thick, jet-black hair—of his features not much could be said, but his eyes were bright and dark, and he gave the impression of suave subtlety and studied politeness. He was always dressed in uniform with rows of medals, which he wore attached to his tunic in a somewhat nonchalant fashion and with no attempt at order!

Agha Petros called himself, I believe, Commander-in-Chief of the Assyrian forces, having retained this nebulous title from the time the refugees fled from their country.

In plain clothes I am sure he would have been distinctly on the "flashy" side, for his love of show and ostentation was very strong. Ambitious he certainly was, but mostly in the sense of money-making—with a certain generosity in an impulsive and lordly way. Wonderful stories he sometimes related of the beauty of Urmia, and what a palace the Assyrians would build for us when we got to his country. But I am afraid it all left me cold, for somehow I did not quite trust Agha Petros, and felt his great show of patriotism was mostly self-interest. However, there was no one else capable or willing to push forward with the Assyrians at that time, and F. was obliged to make the best of the only man ready to lead the people.



THE REFUGEE CAMP AT MINDAN.
(Where the Assyrians rested before starting on their great adventure across the AKRA DAGH.)

F. now made a last return to Mosûl, finding, as usual, that during his absence Agha Petros had done nothing. By dint of much urging on F.'s part, the enterprise started about the middle of October.

Arrangements were made for a final parade at Similan, near Akra. F., with Mr. Burn (one of his officers), together with Agha Petros, motored out to inspect the men.

I remember as if it was yesterday the glory of the autumn morning on which they started. The air was like champagne, and the blue hills of Khurdistan in their snow night-caps sparkled and flashed in the sunshine.

It was a long drive, and a very bad one, so much so that part of the way had to be done on horseback, but, after some hours, they reached Similan.

Drawn up in a square of the camp were the Assyrians, their hearts beating high with hope at the prospect of soon seeing the hills and valleys of their native country.

This time they were going to enter it as conquerors, and wipe out the memory of the past, for I fear religion had very little restraining influence on their instincts for revenge.

To those who were looking on, it must, I think, have been an appealing sight and one fraught with some pathos.

Here were the descendants of a once mighty nation, standing on the self-same soil as their Assyrian forbears. Alas! No longer a victorious army with glistening cohorts in full martial array—but just a little band of armed Christians, the remnants of past glory. No more than six thousand fighting men all told, two mountain guns and four machine guns,—yet ready and strong as of yore to face a host of hostile foes and win their way back through a Moslem enemy's country to their own land.

* * * * * *

As the car drew up, the sun's rays touched their white banners and brought out vividly the blood-red crosses worked upon them. They might have been Crusaders with the light of enthusiasm in their eyes.

Agha Petros made a long and somewhat fulsome speech, extolling F.'s merits and calling him the saviour of the Assyrian nation.

The men were wild with excitement, there was no camouflage about these people, it was easy to appeal to their feelings. "They were a primitive race, who loved hard and hated hard, simply impelled by the momentary passions within them." . . . Waving their flags and breaking loose from their ranks, three great Tiari mountaineers rushed forward and, seizing F., bore him shoulder-high round the square cheering lustily.

CHAPTER XLI

OVER THE AKRA DAGH

SOON after sunrise the next morning the march began. Passing the beautiful little village of Akra, with its burden of fruit trees and running water, the Assyrians were soon joined by some friendly Khurds, who had agreed to co-operate with them through the hostile Barzan country. Here a price had been put on the Sheikh's head on account of the murder of Mr. Bill, one of our Political officers, some time back. After, however, negotiating these regions and climbing the terrible Akra Dagh, the country was less hostile.

The Akra Dagh is, perhaps, one of the most difficult rocks to ascend in those parts; it is steep and rugged and rotten, besides being almost perpendicular. There is no foothold and merely a little goat-path, which is honeycombed with holes and where often it is necessary to hold your breath and hang on by your eyelashes!

Up this formidable rock the mountain and machine guns had to be dragged by hand. Accompanying the expedition were two of our Political officers, Mr. Holmes and Mr. Arnold, who were to report from time to time to F. how matters progressed, but simply as eye-witnesses. Agha Petros was in full command, and it was arranged runners were to be sent back regularly all along the route to keep in touch with the head-quarters.

In order to give Agha Petros and the men a good

send-off, F. and Mr. Burn decided to climb to the highest point of the Akra Dagh with them and then return.

It was a formidable undertaking—partly on foot and partly on mules, they struggled along. The Assyrians at first, carried away by their enthusiasm, took the rocks like goats, shouting and singing and in friendly rivalry vying with each other to wave a flag a point higher than a comrade! Soon, however, the heat and ruggedness of the ascent curbed their ardour, and a wave of silence fell on all, only broken by much puffing and blowing, accompanied by occasional grunts as a man fell unawares into a treacherous hole.

Presently F.'s mule (whose rather disobedient legs seemed to be continually on the wayward tack) gave a violent lurch, and, in trying to recover himself, slipped backwards, landing F. on to a jagged piece of rock! F. told me afterwards that a kind of sickness took possession of him; he had fallen on his spine, and for the moment did not think it was possible for him to move, but two Assyrians came to his assistance, and by dint of sheer determination he was able to struggle on and not to fail the men.

Over boulders sharp and pointed (sending a jar of agony through his spine), he painfully toiled, slowly, hour by hour, making his way up and feeling at times more like a fly climbing a window-pane than a human being.

At last . . . at very long last, when F.'s endurance had almost got to a breaking-point, they reached the summit.

Later I heard that view described . . . wonderful and beyond all words in grandeur—almost, I think, as though from over the edge of the world one looked into immensity. For the moment, however, F. could think of nothing but his own resemblance to the Patriarch



AGHA PETROS. LT. COLONEL CUNLIFFE-OWEN

SOME LEADERS OF THE ASSYRIAN MOVEMENT.

[*To face p. 226.*

Moses! Like that ancient worthy, he, too, leant on his staff and gazed outwards! Moses led the children of Israel safely through the wilderness; F. felt he had brought the Assyrians through the desert and was gazing afar off, even as Moses had gazed at the Promised Land!

Below, far below, lay the green and smiling valley of the Zab—beautiful in its autumn tints. A broad, deep river like a turquoise ribbon wound itself in great loops and encircled the distant Barzan country until it lost itself in a haze of amber.

The day was brilliant, and the atmosphere clear to transparency, so that with the naked eye it was possible to see Urmia, which was but eight marches to the north-east.

Far away in a golden mist the mountains and valleys of their native land were just distinguishable. A great shout of triumph rose from the people, and, forgetting their weariness, they began running and leaping into the valley below.

For some time F. stayed and watched them, their flags fluttering in the breeze as they sprang from boulder to boulder, vanishing and diminishing until lost from view.

* * * * * *

All that had gone before—all the arming, the organization, the weeks of drudgery and discipline—was but a preparation of what was yet to come.

F. and his officers had put their best into the work; they had never spared themselves.

The final success of the "great adventure" was now in the hands of Agha Petros! . . . Would he carry it

out loyally and prove his metal as a man and a patriot? Who could tell? It was in the lap of the gods and F. could do no more. With painful efforts he descended again the rugged path, and a few hours later sank utterly weary and exhausted on to his bed in the camp at Similan.

CHAPTER XLII

A MOSLEM WEDDING

"KHANOUM! Khanoum!!" The clear notes of Pomegranate's voice floated up from the courtyard.

"Will not the Khanoum hasten to meet the Effendi? for see, they come from Akra!"

So hurriedly the Khanoum descended to meet her lord!

I found a smiling husband covered with white dust even to the eyelashes, who painfully and slowly lifted himself out of the car and hobbled towards me.

"What has happened?" I asked anxiously. "Have you been in a border fray? Or has the car turned a somersault?"

"Oh! . . . but it's good to see you, anyway," I continued, taking his arm, for I saw F. was in pain. "Come and sit down and tell me all your news."

Later, comfortably settled in an armchair and over a roaring log fire, I was told the whole story while I busied myself pouring out tea. "And now," said F., as he finished, "it's up to Agha Petros to make the show a success." Ah! and if he fails, I thought, the disappointment will be bitter for all. I did not like to think of it. Agha Petros was a mysterious personage. Only that morning I had been speaking about him to one of his Chaldean friends who frankly said what he

thought of him. Still, the best of him might triumph yet—so I remained silent. Meantime we could but await developments. . . .

The weather was now getting very cold; there were days when we had eight degrees of frost. I kept the "home fires burning"—not to say roaring, in our marble hall, but with porous walls it was sometimes a question how to keep ourselves warm.

During the daytime the sun was delicious, and I used to bask like a cat on the veranda and purr for sheer contentment, but in the mornings and evenings the temperature was only fit for a polar bear!

We took to dancing! Practically the whole garrison danced! We danced on the roof by electric light! We danced on the tennis courts by moonlight! We danced in the hospitals; we even danced in my courtyard! And the sisters, as usual, had a very good time!

There was a whole division of troops quartered at Mosul, comprising cavalry, artillery, infantry and flying corps, consequently no lack of partners, but we were too far away from civilization for it to be a popular station.

The rank and file had absolutely no amusement, and nobody to associate with. The officers certainly were better off; they had some shooting, polo and tennis, but—well, the truth will out—there was a lack of femininity. "Beauty and War" didn't go together at Mosul, and so these fighting warriors found it but a dull place during the interregnum when the Arabs were not stirring up little "raids" for their benefit!

Still, even in the Back of Beyond we managed to smile and kept the ball rolling in other ways! I gave small weekly dinners to pass the time, and my ice-cream puddings lent a *cachet* to the menu—they made me distinctly popular! . . . Cupboard-love, perhaps! but what will you? . . Little Mary is very particular about

her precedence in the East, and likes to be considered first. So I lived in her reflected glory. And that reminds me, since we are on the subject of food, of a distinguished Arab feast I once was invited to. It was at the marriage of a wealthy merchant at Mosul.

The bride was a girl of about fifteen or sixteen summers. After the usual ceremonies of a Mohammedan wedding, the bridegroom usually raises the bride's veil and beholds her for the first time. He then leaves her, in order to go and entertain his men friends. In the case of a rich man, silver is lavishly showered amongst the crowd of beggars who invariably collect round the house.

The little bride, meanwhile, also receives her guests, but only in the harem apartments. This, for the poor girl, is a long and fatiguing experience; not eating herself, she is obliged to stand and watch everyone else feasting.

Alas! this particular little maiden was so overcome with exhaustion that towards the end of the day she fainted dead away, causing great commotion among the older women.

I felt dreadfully sorry for her; she had been standing for hours, dressing and undressing in all her trousseau, this for the benefit of her guests. Her robes were beautiful in texture and colouring, amongst which were many rich silk *abbahs* made expressly in Baghdad. . . . I wa amused at the under garments, for they were mostly trimmed with gold lace!

There were quantities of jewellery, even to her shoes, which were ornamented with seed pearls—for she was a rich little lady! After we had admired and duly asked the price of everything (quite the correct thing to do), we sat on divans round the room and regaled ourselves.

Every now and then a silver bowl of rosewater was

passed in turn to each guest in which to dip their fingers —knives and forks were conspicuous by their absence: fingers were the order of the day!

There was one truly awful compound, a sticky-looking mess on which the flies continually settled. This I tactfully avoided, but other dishes were excellent; for instance, a chicken *pilaf*, done in the real Turkish way, and which I have never seen beaten except, perhaps, in India. One of the most prized dishes is a sheep's head roasted whole, the eye being considered the daintiest of the "tit-bits," and generally offered to the guest of honour! As I was in that enviable position I felt nervous lest it should be placed in front of me; the only course is then to shut your eyes and open your mouth, and swallow it whole like an oyster!

However, I escaped, and I had a shrewd suspicion the portly mistress of the ceremonies was keeping the dainty morsel for her own private consumption later. She had mixed, to a certain extent, with English people and knew our habits.

After we had steadily eaten most of the dishes set before us, a vocal accompaniment started amongst the guests, who began emitting most unmusical noises in every key! . . . I glanced at the friend with whom I had come, and I may say that we held each other with the eye. Neither dared laugh. Rows of dark flashing orbs were furtively watching us—it was a fearsome experience!

These horrible sounds were silenced only when tooth-picks came into play. The guests were then busily absorbed in more immediate matters; however, it was but a temporary lull, and soon the champing of jaws continued merrily as before. I can still vividly recall the whiteness of each guest's thirty-two teeth as with sundry vocal accompaniments they masticated their

food. . . . The more noisy you are under the circumstances the better pleased is your hostess, for it is a sign that you are thoroughly replete and satisfied.

Before we left, a tray was handed round with sweet coloured drinks, together with Turkish coffee and cigarettes.

Amongst the many cakes pressed on us was " Manna " from the mountains. . . . It looked and tasted not unlike nougat, a white, sticky substance. Usually it is cut in slabs, and sometimes mixed with almonds, the whole always thickly sprinkled with sugar.

Manna is gathered at a certain time of the year from off the trees and from the ground, and is still supposed to fall from Heaven, but I believe it is really a sort of honey collected by bees and deposited on flowers. When a particularly strong wind blows the Manna is swept away and carried long distances to different parts of the country—being glutinous, as soon as the wind drops, it clings to the branches of trees or gravitates earthwards, thus giving the impression of falling from the skies! Whether this is the true explanation or not I do not know, but it is that which was given by one of the guests.

CHAPTER XLIII

JONAH'S TOMB

The mosque of " Neby-Yunis " rears proudly to the skies ;
While 'neath the shadow of her walls the prophet Jonah lies.
From Nineveh's gay city the man of God strode forth,
Cursing with righteous anger the people in his wrath.
Yet still great Nineveh survives which Jonah strove to doom :
A mountain grim and silent—a sentry o'er his tomb !

MOSUL I can only describe as a city of sunsets. Its beauty depends, I think, on atmospheric effects. Its streets are narrow, and its buildings of no distinction, but being a border town, probably it has suffered much in consequence from repeated inroads by hostile tribes.

If, however, its architecture of mud and marble be lacking in beauty, its human element is full of interest In the bazaars one meets traders from many lands— Bedouins from the desert, Jewish merchants, wild Yazidis (devil worshippers), Assyrians, Chaldeans, keen-eyed Khurds—the crowds are many hued and many natured, and the babble of tongues would do credit to the Tower of Babel.

To drive through the bazaar is like driving through a swarm of bees; the dusty, dirty thoroughfares are teeming with life, but it is mostly by the waterside the interest of Mosul centres.

There, round about the bridge of boats spanning the

Tigris, much of the bartering, buying and bargaining of the city is carried on.

Little hovel-like houses and booths cluster thick everywhere, reaching even to the water's edge.—And yet, with all the squalor and the dirt, there is always the glamour and colour of the East, painting even poverty in artistic beauty.

Looking across the iridescent blue of the Tigris, lie the mounds and slopes of Nineveh, and under the shadow of the great Mosque of Nebi-Yunis is the shrine of Jonah the prophet.

One glorious afternoon a few days later I made a pilgrimage with F. to visit it.

Once across the bridge, the stress and bustle of the noisy bazaars died away, and we found ourselves in the open country. To the left of the long, straight road leading to Nineveh there are trees and vegetation, palms and tamarisk bushes and quantities of wild liquorice. A stream of running water wanders aimlessly through the land; at this time of year, however, it is so shallow that it is possible to walk across on the boulders standing out from its transparency. To the right there stretches a wide expanse of plain, which in the spring is green with cultivation. To visit Nineveh in the present day is disappointing, for there is nothing to be seen save the pits and mounds of excavations which have been discontinued since the War. With some difficulty it is still possible to trace the outlines of the once famous city. In Bible language one can in very truth say: "Nineveh is laid waste, who shall bemoan her? Her people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them."

In the year 608 B.C. the city was laid waste by the King of the Medes.

The great mound of Koyunjik is supposed to have

been the site of Sennacherib's Palace. In former days the Tigris reached up to its walls, forming a natural moat and formidable barrier against attack from that side, but the rain rained and the winds blew and swept away the great walls, leaving wide breaches all along the river bank so that the waters overflowed and destroyed the natural defences of the palace.

Then history relates the great King Sardanapalus, too proud to surrender to an enemy, gathered together his wives and his slaves and his jewels of gold and silver, and setting fire to his palace perished in the flames, thus making a regal funeral pyre for himself.*

The meaning of the word Nineveh, I was told, meant fish, and so the legend grew that Jonah was three days in the fish, or whale's belly—but I cannot vouch for the authority. I believe the founder of the original city was Ninus, whose mythical wife Semiramis is supposed to have departed to heaven in the shape of a dove!

Leaving the ruins of Nineveh, we drove on to Nebi-Yunis, which can be reached in a few minutes. There is a steep climb up to the mosque, which is situated on an elevated mound.

This little hillock has long been regarded with feelings of envy and despair by archæologists, who believe the ruins of King Esarhaddon's favourite palace lie buried beneath it.

Were it possible to obtain permission to excavate in this vicinity there is little doubt priceless treasures in early Assyrian art would be unearthed. Up to the present the Moslems have sternly refused any encroachments on the sacred spot.

The building itself is, I think, neither very old nor very wonderful, that is from the point of architecture,

* "The Cradle of Mankind," by the Rev. Dr. Wigram, D.D.

but the view from the square courtyard in front of the edifice is beautiful beyond measure.

Right across the broad bosom of the Tigris we could look back over fields and trees to Mosul.

Late in the afternoon, as it then was, towers and buildings rose black against an orange sky, sharply cutting the crimson of the setting sun. From the distance Mosul strangely resembled some legendary city of the Rhine where mediæval fortresses hung threateningly over a magic river flowing beneath its walls. But we had no time to linger gazing at the view, so, carefully placing slippers on our infidel feet, we penetrated into the doorway of the mosque and through the mysterious gloom which leads to the shrine of Jonah.*

The tomb stands by itself railed off from the rest of the mosque ; it is almost entirely in darkness, and all one can see is a large marble slab draped with tawdry flags . . . but the light streaming from a coloured window to the right brought out the rich crimson of a carpet in front of the shrine, tenderly touching with rainbow tints a marble pulpit from which floated yellow and green silken banners, the whole combining to form a picture I shall not soon forget.

* There is some doubt cast on the authenticity of Jonah's Tomb. Some say it is the shrine of a worthy patriarch by name " John the Lame."

CHAPTER XLIV

FAILURE OF THE GREAT ADVENTURE

DURING the next few days bad news came from Agha Petros, and there was a real ache in my heart for F. and all the staff, whose disappointment was deep and bitter.

The enterprise upon which so much care and trouble had been expended had failed.

It appears the Assyrians laid waste the Barzan country and successfully negotiated with the hostile Khurds in those regions.

So far so good. But a large body of mountaineers, the best of the fighting stock and mostly Tiari men, got out of hand. The temptation to branch off westwards towards their own former country was too strong for them, and their old habits of pillaging and looting asserted themselves. Agha Petros completely lost control over these lawless mountaineers, and was left in the lurch with only the weaker Urmians, who were mostly men from the towns and city. They were now practically without food and no means of procuring more.

The Tiaris had devastated the country round and commandeered everything.

What Agha Petros had in effect actually promised those wild highlanders is not clear. I am afraid he was playing a double game; it is probable he promised one thing to them and another to the Urmians. The upshot was a débacle! Agha Petros, together with some



KHURDISH LEVIES WHO ACCOMPANIED THE ASSYRIANS AS FAR AS THE FRONTIER.

[*To face p.* 238.

Jelus and Urmians (the remnants of his six thousand riflemen), hastily doubled back to Mindan Camp, while the recalcitrant contingent, after securing much booty, circled round, and being unable to make their way to their own Tiari mountains, percolated back into the Mosul Vilayet by way of Amadia.

Naturally F. was not only disappointed but angry. If Agha Petros had obeyed orders faithfully they would now be in their own country.

None of the officers was pleased to see this rabble back, but I must own they all took the disappointment bravely and suffered the refugees still, though not gladly.

The difficulties of dealing with stragglers who littered the camp and choked the roads with impedimenta became extremely difficult.

The Assyrians had been given the opportunities of national unity. They had lost their chance; it would never occur again.

But the attempt had been worth making, as otherwise there would always have been the reproach against the British of lack of sympathetic treatment to this small nation, which had certainly to a large extent been sacrificed in the war.

Furthermore, had the Great Adventure succeeded, the establishment of a strong united element of some 100,000 Assyrians on the borders of our occupied territory must have been a safeguard to us. Being Christians, their interests would have been our interests, and without the hostility which unfortunately is sometimes inherent in Moslem races.

Agha Petros himself had lost a good deal of his arrogance and was greatly demoralized. Nevertheless, he was fully persuaded he would be given another chance the following year.

He boasted, not to say prided himself, on the depredations he had caused even to friendly Khurds, and was surprised no one would have further dealings with him. Whereupon, being a Catholic, he immediately threatened F. with the vengeance of the Vatican !

After metaphorically holding this pistol at F.'s head, he continued to cause further trouble in financial and certain other matters. In Baghdad Agha Petros made himself so busy that the authorities eventually considered his absence from Mespots preferable to his presence, and he was warned to quit the country. Eventually, I believe, he made his way to Marseilles, and at Lausanne, I understand, he was again posing this time to the French authorities) as the champion of the Assyro-Chaldean nation !

CHAPTER XLV

CHRISTMAS DAY IN MOSUL

IT is Christmas Day! God bless the round blue world! My love to everybody, good, bad and middling.

For weeks past Pomegranate and I have been busy sewing in secret, turning out small gifts from all sorts of odd articles. I have ransacked the bazaars, and with sorrow confess have made myself anything but a "boon and blessing to men." With utter demoralization I have begged and stolen every cigar and cigarette box I could lay hands upon.

These, methinks, with a wisp of brocade and a twist of gold lace may yet be turned into things of beauty.

In our baronial castle the order has gone forth for a right royal Christmas. There shall be the Yule log—the wassail bowl—and a Christmas-tree! And though there be no children or young maidens from whom to snatch a kiss under the mistletoe, yet there be many mellow men and true—yea! and gallant youths, who, methinks, will make the rafters ring with jollity!

So gather round, dear friends, and let's be merry, e'en though somewhere beneath those brave rows of medals there's a sort-of-achy feeling in your hearts for the home faces in the Homeland far away.

"Peace and good will to men!" It's not easy to grasp, I know—few better; for it's up with the lark—

I mean an aeroplane—you may be in the morning to bomb some Arab village before breakfast.

"Oh, well! and ah, me!" If intermittently swords still rattle in their scabbards—why, God save the King! and a truce to dull care! . . .

Christmas-trees, it is true, do not grow in Mosul, but that does not daunt us.

It needed but a hint to a friend at Zakko, and lo! forthwith a noble fir tree was felled to earth and straightway floated down the Tigris, royally guarded by two mounted *Shabanas* (Arab levies). These good men and strong dragged it from the river bank behind their steeds, and with much dust and hilarity deposited it at my door!

Mindan Camp has also offered her best for the festive season.

It was but yesterday F. returned in a car laden with good things. Eggs, butter, ducks and chickens, all merry and bright! The cocks were crowing, the ducks were quacking, and not to be outdone, a thoughtful hen did her little best by laying an egg in the car for Christmas!

Nevertheless, I have a secret sorrow. It is William and Mary. My two portly turkeys, who waddle about gobbling and gossiping with all who enter the courtyard!

They cause me pain each time I look at them. Mary's such a gentle creature, though William's a bit bluff in his manner. Everybody offers advice as to their "menus"; mostly, however, they seem to have lived and thrived on Brazil nuts! William and Mary have certainly lost their figures—so "in the coming by and by" the couple may do us credit, but it's a gloomy outlook, and I for one cannot feed off either Mary or William! Another little Mary, I know, would strongly object. False sentiment, perhaps—but there it is! . . .

And so the curtain rings up! and the guests arrive.

Mr. Charge, disguised as Father Christmas in long red robe and bushy white beard, throws the doors open and cries: "To THE REVELS!!"

Laughing and talking, we troop in to the Christmas-tree, and are children once more for a few brief hours. Amongst our guests was the young Assyrian Patriarch (a boy of some twelve years old), who came with his Aunt Surma Khanoum.—To me he was somehow a pathetic little figure, dressed in long clerical robe and red sash—the only child present.

It gladdened my heart to see his eyes of wonder when he beheld the Christmas-tree ablaze with lights, and later, when Old Father Christmas placed in his hands a box of crackers, the child was absolutely speechless.

Poor little lonely boy, a vowed celibate before he knew the meaning of a vow.

Christmas passed, and we were just on the edge of the New Year and glad with New Year hopes, when a sudden shadow was cast on F. and his staff.

The sad news came through that Mr. Gibson had lost his life out at Similan. It was the first break in the ranks of that little band of officers who had worked loyally and faithfully with F. for the refugees.

Personally I felt it deeply, for Mr. Gibson had been a good friend to me during that long trek up to Kermanshah—how long ago it seemed!

His body was brought to Mosul and laid with all honour in the little Military Cemetery, which lies away from the din of the city facing the great silent desert.

Late one afternoon F., together with a few of his brother officers, stood beside him where he lay, wrapped

in the folds of the Union Jack. Bare-headed they waited while the heart-chilling notes of the Last Post rang out, echoed and died away.

Then, as the sun sank to rest, silently they turned and left him—left him in that peaceful spot where many of our boys lie in the flower of their youth and manhood.

Far away perhaps from his Homeland, but not far from the memories of those *with* whom and *for* whom he worked so faithfully.

CHAPTER XLVI

MURDERS IN MOSUL AND AN INCIDENT AT KING FEISUL'S CORONATION

ALL the winter months F. and his staff were kept continually busy with the refugees—twelve thousand families were settled on the land north of Mosul. These families consisted of those who were all along averse from the Agha Petros scheme, but it required some moving to get them away from the comforts of the Mindan Camp. There is little doubt most of them did not want to work for their living; for two years now they had been practically fed and clothed by the British Government, and, like the immortal tramp, "they ate well, and slept well, but a job of work made them all of a tremble!"

Nothing would induce the Urmians, however, to settle on the land, while as regards the mountaineers some only agreed to do so.

Agha Petros's following remained obdurate, and would listen to nothing except again to make their way by force of arms to their old homes. But on account of their misdeeds in the late expedition it was impossible to contemplate giving them another chance. They had failed entirely through their own fault and would have to abide the consequences.

The camp was now being cleared as quickly as possible, and by the end of May those who were willing to settle

in Iraq were given a Government grant of money and stock.

The Urmians, who would hear of nothing but return to Urmia, were also given an equivalent in money and were left to make the best of their way into Persia via Hamadan.

The winter of our discontent was now nearly over. Once more it was gay and gladsome April. Nature had already begun to work on her magic carpet. Anemones (the first spring flowers), pink and violet, mauve and white, were scattered far and wide like jewels over the land, and the river bank was patterned in a tapestry of colour.

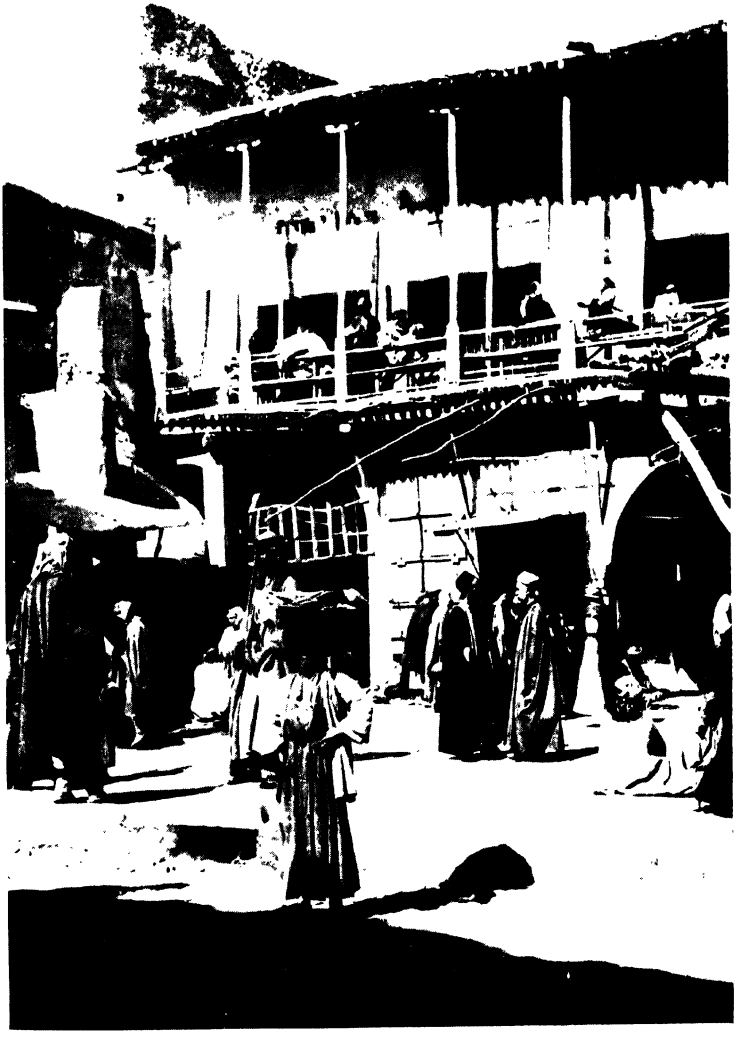
Vast expanses of young fresh green began to spring up everywhere, and away out by Mindan Camp scarlet tulips flamed in waste places and quantities of wild hyacinths covered the ground.

April is ever a festive time in Mosul, for then the land is decked in beauty, and the winds are softly scented with the breath of growing things. Still, though every prospect pleases, man about this time was vile.

A large party in Mesopotamia were averse to King Feisul; they did not approve of the new régime, according to which an Arab was to be appointed to each district in order to replace the then existing Political Officer, the latter merely to act as British Adviser.

In Mosul, especially, the majority of the population were Chaldean-Christians, or Khurds, who were distinctly averse from the idea of an Arab over them, and frankly admitted whatever *mutessarif* was elected, his life would be forfeited.

It was at the individual's peril, therefore, should the Government elect to send an Arab to Mosul. Notwith-



A Typical Arab Coffee-Shop at Mosul.

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standing this threat a *mutessarif* was appointed, and I think it was the very evening he arrived that the unfortunate man was shot while sitting at the window of his house.

After this, no other representative was sent from Baghdad. None was found willing to come forward and risk his life. . . . But this was not the only tragedy, for a military intelligence officer disappeared. No one had seen him for three days, though usually constantly about and living within the town.

Eventually it came to light that an Englishman had been murdered in his house and his body thrown down the well of the courtyard. Of course this was a great shock to everybody. This sort of murder was not conducive to peace of mind, and though it was possible his Indian servant may have committed the crime for the sake of theft, still there is no doubt there was a good deal of unrest amongst the population brought about by the new régime, and which had not existed under the former British methods.

King Feisul was not popular with many, more especially round about Mosul. In Baghdad, in order to make the policy of the Colonial Office a *fait accompli*, the coronation was hurriedly pushed forward; in spite of which, however, it did not take place until July. The story goes that wood as usual being difficult to procure, the throne was manufactured from what was obtainable at the time. Beautifully draped on the day of the coronation, it appeared an imposing seat, in fact all that the heart could desire, that is, from the front view! But an eye-witness with a pretty wit affirmed to me later that, after attending the ceremony, he happened to linger awhile—most of the people had left—and as the throne was being conveyed off the platform, the back of it was exposed to view, whereupon to his vast amuse-

ment he read " Dewar's Whisky " in large black letters painted all over it ! Good old whisky cases for a Mohammedan king's throne was a bit overdoing it, perhaps, and not the steadiest or, indeed, the most suitable seat for the first reigning monarch of Iraq !

CHAPTER XLVII

A DANCE IN A SANDSTORM

JUNE came in like a whirlwind on the back of a real Mespots sandstorm.

It was an unfortunate coincidence, for that very day the Air Force were giving a dance on the club tennis courts. But it takes much to daunt us in the land of Abraham—perhaps here we become more primitive and less blasés. I think sometimes the spartan spirit of ancient worthies must permeate the atmosphere. Nothing short of the Flood itself would have damped the ardour of our young hosts; they had worked with untiring energy and kindness to make the dance a success, and we were determined neither Earth, Air, Fire or Water should stagger us. So into the sandstorm we whirled—and between the gusts pirouetted over the tennis courts like spirits of the storm itself, appearing and disappearing in clouds of dust.

Lights went out and hair became sandy, still we kept up the giddy pace—and even enjoyed ourselves, in spite, too, of the fact that many of those light-hearted boys had to be up at dawn the next morning to bomb a troublesome Khurdish village.

One of the best and one of the most joyous, alas! has "gone West"—crashed in his plane not long afterwards, but I like to think that for that night at least "he seized the chance of laughter and happiness."

* * * * * *

Our pilgrimage in Iraq was now drawing to a close and my last public entertainment was at the opening of the new Bridge of Boats. This was built by the British to replace the unsafe and dilapidated causeway which the Turks had commenced and never properly finished. Its great masonry buttresses jutted out into mid-stream, looking very imposing, but—in truly Eastern fashion—this, the easiest part of the building, was commenced first; when the workmen found that complications arose, they calmly gave up the job, with the comforting saying: "Allah alone created perfection." The bridge was then bolstered up by some old boats, and so remained unsafe and unreliable until the present time.

It was, therefore, without question, a gala day for Mosul when the British presented the town with a new bridge.

On this occasion the whole garrison came out in all their war paint, and the bridge was solemnly declared open for traffic.

The regiments then marched over with flags flying and bands playing.

That evening the whole town was lighted up. There was much feasting and fireworks (always dear to the heart of the Arabs), and perhaps in a casual whisper I may also add that later champagne flowed freely, even among the followers of the Prophet himself!

All through the piping days of August, I packed, and packed, and packed. It was the hottest on record for many years; with my head continually in my boxes I began to feel almost topsy-turvy. It was a fearsome month, but we had "to burn the candle of our souls" in patient endurance and, moreover, in darkened rooms for coolness.

The sun was implacable, and near the horizon seemed

to be smouldering and angry; outside under the sheltering shadow of the walls the Assyrian sentries crouched, and I am sorry to say, sometimes slept! Only the Arabs, those children of the sun, seemed impervious to the brassy sky overhead.

Pariah dogs lay panting and listless, seeking shade 'neath bits of scrub or in dusty ditches, sometimes slinking fearfully down narrow streets to hide under the shadow of the houses. There was a price on all their heads, and my life was made hideous in consequence. Under my window I would suddenly hear a shot ring out, followed by a piercing yell, and then some poor wounded animal would drag itself in mortal agony for a few yards until a second shot ended its misery—and somehow it always seemed to require two shots; those piteous notes of pain rang in my head continually. There was a military order in Mosul for dogs without collars to be shot at sight.

Unfortunately my bedroom window practically looked on to the police barracks. I used to stop breathing to listen for those heart-rending, piercing cries, and it kept my nerves at concert pitch. The order was a right one I knew, and a wise order, for rabies was prevalent at that time . . . but it doesn't do to be fond of animals in the East . . . for cruelty and misery are twin sisters who stalk behind most dumb creatures in these lands.

CHAPTER XLVIII

FAREWELL TO MOSUL

Oh ! Life is a garden, wherein, to and fro,
Down pathways of Friendship, men come and men go.
Some linger, — some pass, — yet I know there are some
Make my Garden the fairer, because they have come.

In Life's Garden of Friendship for them I will grow
" Rosemary " (" that's for Remembrance ") you know,
And " Pansies " (for Thoughts) round each name I will trace
As a garland of Love, in the sunniest place.

" Old Time " is the Gardener, and always for you
He will water the seeds of " Remembrance " true,
And my pansies of gold he will tenderly train,
Till you pass through my Garden, dear Friends, once again.

THE night before we left Mosul I lay in bed in the dark and listened for the last time to the familiar sounds outside my window. From the barracks, the cheery notes of a bugle sounded " Lights out," and faint and far away the humming buzz of the bazaar, like a drowsy bee, rose and fell on the hot, still air. Down the dusty road came the soft swish and patter of sheep urged on with hissing cries by their Arab drivers. . . . How often I had listened to those sounds; for me they would soon be silent. . . . In a few short hours at most I should hear them no more.

The stars came out one by one. I watched the moon rise, and the glory of its white magic kept me from

sleeping. From a Moslem cemetery there floated towards me the wailing of women who kept lonely vigil beside some new made grave; it was an eerie sound and haunting like the cry of a soul in torture. I did not want to listen, but the persistent notes went on wailing, until broken by the laughter and songs of soldiers passing under my window.

Presently a motor-car dashed along the road casting fantastic shadows on the wall. Everything I heard sounded to me now remote, like a dream from which I should soon awaken into a different world—a world I had known long ago, spent within the narrow limits of civilization with its artificial conventions and hoary traditions. Since then old landmarks had disappeared and my life's foundations shifted.

The past years of a freer life had made me come in touch with a great deal—in touch with the things that count. I felt I, too, was changed.

Did I regret those years? I think not. . . . I would not have missed them, though the price sometimes had been hard.

In spite of many warring influences, of discomforts and hardships, they had given me the gift of "insight" —a better understanding of the deeper meaning of things.

They had brought me closer to my fellow humans, to their passions and joys, their sorrows and desires and, above all, "to the greatness which lies in the hearts of common men"—men who go out alone into distant regions, who endure and work and suffer with serene cheerfulness, often with no white face or refining influence near and without the softer touch of home-life. Here, in the cradle of mankind, the light of comprehension had come to me, and I realized as I had never realized before, my own and others' humanity—wider

knowledge, after all, means greater toleration. A deeper insight into the hearts of others must surely bring larger sympathy and understanding for the temptations and frailties of our fellows.

So I lay in the moonlight, idly thinking and dreaming, and my thoughts wandered to far-away places, to lonely outposts where men were building up the Empire by sheer pluck and dogged determination—young political officers, often not much more than boys, but charged with great responsibilities.

They filled my soul with pride and admiration, and I wondered if a woman's presence among them and the fact of a very living sympathy, had ever by chance helped a bit, had ever even for a fugitive moment ironed a crease or two out of puckered foreheads! . . . Ah! well . . . I hoped so. . . I sincerely hoped so. . . .

> If we never had had to rough it,
> *Never* had knock-down blows!
> Could we laugh at life?—I wonder!
> Should we love as much?—Who knows!

The following day there was hustle and stir betimes in the courtyard. We started on our journey while the morning was still young and fair, for we wished to avoid the great heat of the day.

Even at that early hour one or two kind friends assembled to bid us God-speed. The sunlight flickered everywhere in a shimmering mist of heat as we sped through the familiar streets and out into the open desert.

My last vivid recollection of Mosul was a swarm of little, copper-coloured Arabs running beside the cars, impish laughing faces with gleaming white teeth, holding out diminutive hands for baksheesh! We tossed a few coins from the car and left them scrambling in the dust amidst shrieks of merriment.



THE AUTHOR IN ASSYRIAN DRESS

(*To face p.* 234.

On and on we raced through the sun and sand, both of us wrapped in our own thoughts, and disinclined for conversation.

At Shergat I was in clover! There was a saloon carriage with dressing-room and kitchen attached ready and waiting for us. This had been kindly put at our disposal by the Director of Railways.

That night I had a dinner party on the train. Besides our own officers, there were several men from Mosul travelling with us. And so in the light-hearted, easy manner of the East, the evening slipped away in spite of heat and sandflies. At Baghdad we lingered for about ten days to enable F. to finish his work and to say good-bye to friends. The journey to Basrah was now much easier, for, instead of taking eight days by combined boat and train, it was possible to get from Baghdad to Basrah in thirty-six hours. Things had not stood still on the railway, and the line was connected right through. Civilization had not, however, risen to the giddy heights of providing a restaurant car, so it was necessary to stop at certain stations for refreshments.

But in this wonderful land of the Old Testament romance still travelled along with us. In the violet air of an Arabian night we stepped out into the home of Abraham. Ur of the Chaldees and city of the moon god was our first halting-place!

By the light of dim lanterns in a little desert siding we dined. . . . Beyond, in a vast shadow world, we could just see a huge sandy mound rising out of a flat and desolate plain. That was Ur, where Father Abraham had lived and moved and had his being. Here and there were scattered the tents of a few Bedouins. Thousands of years ago the same black Bedouin tents had sheltered the ancient patriarch.

. . . . "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot

the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife ; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan ; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."

And yet the city was old even in Abram's days, for three thousand years earlier still it was a large and prosperous place. Since the dawn of time countless human feet must have trodden their pilgrim way down those streets to worship at the Temple of Nanna the Moon God, or to gaze with awe and wonder at the great blue Ziggurat Tower, " the meeting-place of Earth and Heaven."

Formerly F. had spent a few days in the vicinity, for at that time he was superintending Turkish prisoners of war, and Dr. Hall, who was then engaged in excavating at Ur, asked permission to employ these prisoners for digging purposes.

I believe Dr. Hall was the first to discover part of the Temple of the Moon God, but since those days greater wonders have been unearthed. Nebuchadnezzar, in restoring the temple, left untouched the original foundations, so that Ur of the Chaldees may yet prove to be the " Library of the World " and unfold to us the " Story of the Creation " and the Fall of Man, both of which are based, I am told, on legends coming from the land of Sumer ; and to think these Sumerian people were nearly extinct by the time of Abraham ! . . . It made one's brain dizzy to contemplate.

Now in our own time the veil of centuries was about to be lifted, and shortly there would be revealed to the world mysteries long hidden beneath the dust of ages.

CHAPTER XLIX

HOME ONCE MORE

AND so we drifted back to Basrah, where, like Sinbad the Sailor, I, too, had started on a voyage of discovery. I had launched my barque into the unknown, and the old River of Time had been stirred by many ripples since.

After three years' wanderings, the River Front Hotel appeared to me a most pleasing place and replete with comfort. Now I am told it has been turned into a luxurious club, where beauty and fashion congregate.

In that mellow month of September, we found Basrah damp and overpowering, more especially after the dry desert heat.

It was a real joy in the cool of the evening to step into a launch and laze on the river, or glide down one of the many shady creeks which surround the city. There with my sketching things I spent happy days, drifting and watching the sunsets . . . those wonderful sunsets which were always taking me by surprise. Beauty has no nationality, no monopoly, I know, but for sheer gorgeousness of colour, I think the sunsets of Mesopotamia might carry off the prize!

At the end of those days of peace came one, standing out among many shadow pictures. It was the evening before we left, and we lingered late on the river. . . . That

was a night of nights! Out over the moonlit water the city of Basrah showed up fairy-like. Together we watched the stars twinkling like fire-flies through the branches of date palms, and the great world of civilization seemed infinitely remote and unreal.

It was pure bliss to lie idly dreaming; not a sound disturbed the stillness save the ripple of the gliding boat and the myriad orchestra of insect life, illusive and restless round us.

But Time and the Hour had struck for us to leave. Already Life's great Conjurer had waved his wand, the curtain was being rung down, and the Drama of the East passing from our vision. Still we lingered loath to depart . . . gradually the purple shadows of the night crept up out of the water, and I watched the moon-fairies playing hide-and-seek amongst the ripples.

Beside me, F. sat, strangely silent, his profile silhouetted against the dim dusk of the night, his features blurred and indistinct.

Presently he moved restlessly and struck a match; the flame lit up the outline of his face, and then I saw the sadness in his eyes. . . . Ah! I understood . . . His work was finished, the free desert life was over, he was leaving the East, the East which I realized now would always, always call him, that was as strong wine in his blood. My heart went out in sympathy . . . instinctively I felt the memories of the last years were surging up and passing in procession through his mind.

"*Partir c'est toujours mourir un peu*"—and a momentary shadow fell across my soul as well, for lives are lived more simply and hearts grow large in far-off lands.

Soon there would be left but fragrant memories of friends and scenes with which we had long been familiar.

There, for some time, we sat lost in reverie. Nature seemed standing still—silent, expectant—and the passion of the night called to me. Gradually it filled my heart and sank into my soul, weaving strange fancies within my brain. Above hung a canopy of blue, embroidered with stars, and round us in shadow-land the great tufted heads of the palms stood out against the disc of the moon as though carved in ebony. It touched with quicksilver the awning of the boat, making the cords scintillate and sparkle as though bound by ropes of diamonds—surely it was a magical night, and together we were floating through an enchanted world.

"Peace, Effendi!" I whispered, slipping my hand into F.'s. "Isn't it peace? After years of strain and turmoil? There seems to be a spell in the air and on the water, as though for an enchanted moment 'we swung in a phantom boat between two worlds' and caught a fleeting glimpse of 'Nirvana' before being reincarnated into another life!" . . .

And so we passed—passed once more across the bar and slipped into the Persian Gulf. In the distance now an amber curtain was drawn over the Cradle of the World, veiling in a haze of heat its outline from our eyes. Naught remained save faint echoes of those Bible lands. . . .

Stepping to the ship's rail, we stood side by side, and I looked away out into the Western horizon. . . . Presently I was conscious of a whisper in the air, a whisper of the sea. "Faint flutterings and gentle breezes . . . and then all at once a great breath of the Ocean came to us, like a breath of Life!"

It stirred depths within me, infinitely tender, memories of home faces and friends I loved—and, oh! it seemed a hundred years since I had clasped their hands in mine. With an odd catch in my throat I turned to

F. . . . our eyes met, and I think he understood . . . gently he drew my arm into his. . . .

There's sapphire on the water,
There's radiance in the West,
And 'thro' a gold horizon
Lies the land I love the best.
In my life a deeper meaning,
In my ears a glad refrain,
For the waves are singing England !
And my heart is whisp'ring England,
Home again !

THE END

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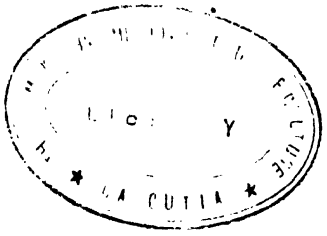
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